

**MAJOR POLICY INITIATIVES , SCHEMES LAUNCHED , INNOVATIONS
MADE AND DECISIONS TAKEN**

The Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare has taken the following major policy decisions and initiatives/achievements during the last eight years to bring about much required relief to the Ex-Servicemen and their dependents:

(i) PENSION

- Government of India had taken historic decision to **implement One Rank One Pension (OROP)** in November 2015 and issued orders on 7.11.2015 for implementation of OROP, a long pending demand of ex-servicemen. Govt. has implemented the OROP by issuing Concordance Table vide letter dated 17.10.2018 for fixation of notional pay for Armed Forces personnel who retired/ died in various ranks during the 4th, 5th and 6th Pay Commission periods (including 3rd Pay Commission for Sailors only). Accordingly 20.60 lakh Ex-Servicemen out of 25 lakh Defence Pensioners have been benefitted by this 7.11.2015 Government order on OROP. A sum of Rs. 10795.4 crore has been disbursed as arrears to 20,60,220 Defence Forces Pensioners on account of implementation of OROP. The yearly estimated recurring expenditure is about Rs. 7123 crore
- In February, 2020 a long pending demand of pre-2006 retired Honorary NaibSubedar (HNS) was met by the Government. The benefit of revision of pension of post-1.1.2006 retired **Havildars who were granted Honorary rank of NaibSubedars has been extended w.e.f 1.1.2006 to pre-2006 retiree Havildars who were granted Honorary rank of NaibSubedars.** Approximately, 75,250 pre-2006 retired HNS have benefited from this decision.
- It has also been decided to **do away with the condition of minimum requirement of 7 years of continuous service for grant of enhanced rate of Ordinary Family Pension for Armed Forces personnel who died/invalided out even with less**

than 7 years of qualifying service. Further, in case of Defence Forces personnel who died within ten years before the 1st day of October 2019 without completing continuous service of 7 years, their family shall also be eligible for family pension at enhanced rates w.e.f. 1.10.2019.

- The Department has a dedicated Pension Grievance Cell to look after the grievances of the ESMs/ Pensioners, which has resulted in better grievance redressal system. Overall percentage of disposal of grievances is 97%. This has been achieved due to intense follow up, regular interaction with the concerned offices as well as weekly review. The impact of the above indicated initiatives, together with strict compliance with shorter timeline of 30 days for **resolution of grievances and use of technology has resulted in reduction of average disposal time from 87 days in 2014 to 25 days in 2018 and further reduced to 21-27 days in 2020-21.** The efforts made above underscore our concerted efforts to reduce grievances, bring down the disposal time, and promote dialogue and interaction with our ex-servicemen as also to sensitize the RajyaSainik Boards (RSBs)/ZilaSainik Boards (ZSBs) for resolving the grievances of ESM.
- It has been decided by the Government that the **life certification of retiring pensioner either physically or otherwise (through biometric or life certificate) is not required** for release of gratuity, commuted value of pension, Ex-gratia payments, monthly pension etc. where the payment is to be disbursed through System for Pension Administration (Raksha) popularly called as SPARSH application.
- Disabled child/sibling was eligible for family pension if overall monthly income of such disabled child/sibling from sources other than family pension is not more than Rs.9000/- along with dearness relief thereon. Now, Ministry of Defence, Government of India has taken a decision vide letter dated 28.09.2021 to **enhance income criteria for grant of family pension to children/siblings suffering from mental or physical disability** and accordingly such child/sibling shall be eligible for family pension for life, if his/her overall income from sources other than family pension remains less than the entitled family pension at ordinary rate i.e. 30% of the last pay drawn by the deceased Govt. servant/pensioner concerned plus the

dearness relief admissible thereon. The financial benefit in such cases shall accrue with effect from 08.02.2021.

- After the 7th CPC, the highest pay in the Government has been revised to Rs. 2,50,000/- p.m. Accordingly, Department of Pensions & Pensioners' Welfare (DoP&PW) **revised maximum ceiling limits of two family pension payable to a child/children in respect of both the parents to Rs. 1,25,000/- p.m.** (50% of Rs. 2,50,000/- Ordinary Family Pension at enhanced rate) and Rs. 75,000/- p.m. (30% of Rs. 2,50,000/- Ordinary Family Pension) w.e.f. 01.01.2016. Ministry of Defence vide order dated 29.10.2021 has extended the same to all Armed Forces Personnel w.e.f. 01.01.2016.
- A dedicated **Raksha Pension Shikayat Nivaran Portal** designed to speedily redress pension, including family pension-related grievances of ESM and their dependents (<https://rakshapension.desw.gov.in>) has been launched on 14.01.2022. The portal will enable processing of grievances quickly by the DESW. Through the portal, an SMS and e-mail will be forwarded to the applicants on their registered mobile number and e-mail, intimating confirmation of registration of grievance and for tracking its status. Applicants can also provide feedback for the purpose of improving quality of redressal of grievances.

(ii) WELFARE

- In the Financial year 2021-22, **an amount of Rs 320 crore has been allotted** for the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund (AFFDF) in Jan 2022. This will clear all the backlog in respect of the 1.58 lakh applications of Education Grant pending since May 2018 worth Rs 284.00 Cr and 7583 applications of Marriage Grant pending since Feb 2020 worth Rs 36.00 Cr. Thus a total of 1.66 lakh ESMs will be benefitted through this initiative
- The nomenclature of the Army Battle Casualties Welfare Fund (ABCWF) has been changed to **Armed Forces Battle Casualties Welfare Fund (AFBCWF)** for extending the benefits also to the battle casualties of Air Force and Navy in May

2020. The additional ex-gratia amount has also been enhanced from the existing Rs.2 lakh to Rs.8 lakh for all Battle Casualties except Battle Casualties with disability less than 60%, where the amount has been enhanced from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 4 lakh per casualty.

- The rate of Prime Minister Scholarship Scheme (PMSS) has been increased from Rs 24,000 per year to Rs 30,000/- per year for boys and from Rs 27,000 per year to Rs 36,000/- per year for girls w.e.f FY 2019-20.
- The rate of financial assistance to 100% Disabled Children of Ex-Servicemen/Widows under the RakshaMantri Ex-Servicemen Welfare Fund (Funded out of Armed Forces Flag Day Fund) has been increased from Rs 1000 per month per child to Rs 3000 per month per child w.e.f 1st August 2021.
- KendriyaSainik Board (KSB) services have been successfully on-boarded on Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Bharat & (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance) UMANG mobile portal.
- RajyaSainik Boards (RSBs) at Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh (UT) have been formed to look after the welfare of Ex-Servicemen (ESM) fraternity within State/UT.
- Cheshire Homes look after leprosy patients, mentally handicapped patients, and chronic spastic / paraplegic and TB patients. The grant amount of Rs 9,000 pa per inmate has been enhanced to Rs 15,000/- pa per inmate w.e.f 01.04.2021 by the KendriyaSainik Board (KSB) to Cheshire Homes at Delhi and Lucknow and Raphael Ryder International Cheshire Home, Dehradun.

(iii) RESETTLEMENT

- The Department is also exploring the possibilities for introduction of new employment schemes in sectors such as technical services to generate more employment for ex-servicemen in areas other than security related jobs. Guidelines have been issued on 6.2.2020 for functioning of DGR Scheme to

provide ESM manpower for 'Technical Services' to Government Establishments/Complexes through DGR Empanelled State ESM Corporations.

- Notification regarding grant of **ESM status to Short Service Commissioned Officers who took premature retirement after completing initial period of engagement was issued on 16.2.2020.** This will make the entry through Short Service Commission more attractive.
- The long pending demand for **use of military ranks by Short Service Commission (SSC) officers after release from service has also been accepted by the Government.** The earlier Government order on the subject dated 27.07.1983 has been modified through a corrigendum dated 23.03.2021 thereby allowing SSC officers of the army to use their military ranks after release from service provided they are eligible to get the status of Ex-Servicemen (ESM). The decision will serve as a big boost to the young aspirants and the existing SSC officers, besides making SSC more attractive.
- **The Guidelines regarding operation of DGR empaneled security agencies were comprehensively revised** to bring more transparency and competitiveness and the service charges were also reduced to make it more cost effective for CPSEs.

(iv) HEALTHCARE

- In February, 2019 the Govt. issued orders for grant of **Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) facilities to the Assam Rifles pensioners and their dependents** residing in India and Nepal. These facilities were also extended to **World War-II Veterans, Emergency Commissioned Officers (ECOs), Short Service Commissioned Officers (SSCOs) and pre-mature retirees** in March 2019.

- In consonance with the provisions of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare OM dated 1.1.2020, MoD Order dated 8.7.2020 were issued where cases of disability in respect of **sons of ECHS beneficiaries occurring after attaining the age of 25 years can also be considered as dependants for availing medicare under ECHS** subject to fulfillment of certain conditions laid down in Ministry of Health and Family Welfare OM dated 7.5.2018.
- In view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and keeping in view of the vulnerability of ECHS beneficiaries to Corona Virus as well as minimizing footfall at ECHS Polyclinics, It has been decided to extend the **special sanction for purchase & reimbursement of medicines without referral of Polyclinic during the year through various** Govt orders.
- In a big relief to Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) beneficiaries, it has been decided by the Government vide its letter dated 25.3.2022 to extend the period from 15 days to 30 days for purchase of Not Available (NA) medicines and consumables from open market on reimbursement basis at a time subject to the maximum value of medicines and consumables not exceeding Rs. 25,000/- each time under the general conditions and Rs. 75,000/- each time under the special conditions. For Cancer Medicines, the maximum value of purchase has also been enhanced from Rs. 2 Lakh to Rs. 5 Lakh each time.
- **Two new Regional Centres at Yol and Bhubaneshwar** for catering to a large number of ECHS beneficiaries in the backward and remote areas in the States of Himachal Pradesh and Odisha were operationalised in 2021.
