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‘हर काम देश के नाम’

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Raksha Mantri chairs 31st Kendriya Sainik Board meeting in New Delhi to further ensure welfare & resettlement of ex-servicemen

Urges States/UTs to devise new ways to utilise veterans’ rich experience for the benefit of the nation

Ex-servicemen are national assets; Government fully committed to ensure their well-being: Shri Rajnath Singh

“Rs 800 crore financial assistance provided to over three lakh beneficiaries in last three years under various welfare schemes of Kendriya Sainik Board”

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh presided over the 31st meeting of Kendriya Sainik Board (KSB) in New Delhi on April 11, 2023. The KSB is the apex body of the Central Government and States/Union Territories (UTs) entrusted with the responsibility of the welfare and resettlement of the Ex-Servicemen (ESM). Ways to reach out to the ESM fraternity through policy measures to further ensure their welfare and resettlement were discussed during the meeting.

Delivering the keynote address, Shri Rajnath Singh termed the ex-servicemen as national assets and urged States/UTs to devise new ways to utilise their rich and practical experience for the benefit of the nation. He stated that there is reservation in jobs for ex-servicemen in several states, which needs to be completely followed and monitored.

The Raksha Mantri appreciated the fact that the Centre and States/UTs have always worked together for the welfare of soldiers,

describing the works being carried out by KSB as a shining example of cooperative federalism. “There are differences between states or political parties on many issues. All this is part of a democracy. But, when it comes to the welfare of our soldiers & veterans, everyone comes on the same page. There is always social and political consensus for our soldiers. Just as the Armed Forces protect the whole nation equally, it is our national and collective responsibility to ensure that our soldiers lead a dignified life when they retire & return back to society,” he said.

With a view to keeping the Armed Forces young, a large number of soldiers are honorably discharged at the age of 35-40 years. This results in the addition of about 60,000 soldiers every year to the existing strength of 34 lakh ex-servicemen. Shri Rajnath Singh voiced the Government’s unwavering resolve towards the welfare of the ESM fraternity, listing out a number of measures taken by the Ministry of Defence to ensure their well-being and development. “In the last three years, financial assistance of about Rs 800 crore has been provided to around 3.16 lakh beneficiaries under various welfare schemes of KSB. About Rs 240 crore were distributed to one lakh beneficiaries in the last financial year. The budget as required is being provided by the Government,” he said.

The Raksha Mantri added that institutional grants have been given to Paraplegic Rehabilitation Centre, Kirkee; Cheshire Home, Mohali and 36 war memorial hospitals across the country including in Dehradun, Lucknow and Delhi. He reiterated that the health care of the ESM fraternity is the Government’s topmost priority and the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) facilities are being reviewed on a regular basis.

At present, 30 Regional Centres and 427 Polyclinic are functional. Approval for 75 Type C & D polyclinics are already given and video platform SeHAT OPD was launched to increase the reach. Empanelment of new quality hospitals like Tata Memorial Hospitals at various places are being done. Ease in procurement of medicines is being made to ensure availability of medicines for the beneficiaries.

Shri Rajnath Singh also highlighted the special awareness and outreach programmes being conducted to reach out to the ESM fraternity. Special events are also being organised to include citizens and the corporate sector in the collective effort for the welfare and

resettlement of the veterans. In all the schemes, the process from application to distribution is fully automated, he said.

The Raksha Mantri commended the Armed Forces for ensuring border security and serving the nation whenever the need arises, especially during natural calamities. He lauded the ex-servicemen for keeping that fire of serving the motherland lit even after formally retiring from the service. He highlighted the valuable contribution made by the veterans on a number of occasions, especially during the country's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The ex-servicemen had assisted in the Government's efforts by providing medicines, ventilators, oxygen cylinders and other relief material to the needy in different parts of the country.

The agenda points of the meeting included ways to expand the scope of Armed Forces Veterans' Day celebrations; enhancing pride amongst ESM community; increase in grants under Armed Forces Flag Day Fund; Uniformity in State benefits/grants provided to Armed Forces personnel; establishment of ESM Corporation in respective states and instituting an award for the best performing Rajya Sainik Board. Shri Rajnath Singh hoped that the System for Pension Administration Raksha (SPARSH) will go a long way in solving the pension issues faced by the ex-servicemen. He urged the state governments to give priority to resolving land dispute issues of ex-servicemen as well as serving personnel.

Ministers of various States; Chief of the Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan; Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar; Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Pande; Secretary (Ex-servicemen Welfare) Shri Vijoy Kumar Singh; Secretary, KSB Commodore HP Singh; representatives from States/UTs and other senior civil & military officers took part in the deliberations.

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