

COURT NO. 2
ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

12.

OA No.3653/2025

912660-T Sgt Sunny Pandita (Retd) Applicant
Versus
Union of India & Ors. Respondents

For Applicant : Mr. Tatsat Shukla & Mr Rajeev
Kumar Advocates
For Respondents : Mr Kuldeep Singh, Advocate

CORAM

HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE ANU MALHOTRA, MEMBER(J)
HON'BLE LT GEN C P MOHANTY, MEMBER (A)

ORDER

19.11.2025

The applicant 912660-T Sgt Sunny Pandita (Retd) vide the present OA filed under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007 makes the following prayers:

- (a) *"To direct the respondents to rectify Basic pay fixation anomaly in the salary of the applicant by re-fixing his basic pay as per the most beneficial option to applicant on implementation of 6th CPC and subsequent on the principles affirmed by Hon'ble Tribunal in OA No.1182/2018, Sub Mahendra Lal Shrivastava Vs Union of India & Ors.*

- (b) *To direct the respondents to make payment of arrears of salary accrue to him on re-fixation of his basic pay, in accordance with most beneficial option, on the principles affirmed by Hon'ble Tribunal in OA 1182/2018, Sub Mahendra Lal Shrivastava Vs Union of India & Ors.*
- (c) *To direct the respondents to pay interest @12% per annum on the arrears accrue to the applicant on arrears of payment on Re-fixation of basic pay.*
- (d) *To pass any other order or direction in favour of applicant which may be deemed just and proper under the facts and circumstances of this case in the interest of justice."*

2. The applicant after having been found fit was enrolled in the Indian Air Force on 28.06.2005 was promoted to the rank of LAC on 01.10.2006 during the transition period of the 6th CPC. The applicant submits that his basic pay was fixed at Rs.7700/- whereas his junior's basic pay was fixed at Rs.7820/- on 01.07.2007 and on 01.01.2024 his basic pay was fixed at Rs.48200/- whereas his junior's basic pay was fixed at Rs.49,600/- and thus he is receiving less amount of Rs.1500/- every month which is violation of settled law on the subject. The applicant further submits that while implementing

the directions of the Armed Forces Tribunal in OA 1182/2028- titled *Sub Mahendra Lal Shrivastava (Retd) Vs Union of India & Ors.* the Air Force Headquarters extended the benefit of most beneficial option *in rem* and granted the same to the applicant as well. However, the respondents vide letter No. AFCAOI/10104/1/APG/JCDA/II(IC) dated 03.07.2025 reverted the most beneficial option and recovery initiated. The Govt letter reads to the effect:

“REVISION OF MOST BENEFICIAL OPTION CASES(AIRMEN) 6 CPC

- 1. As per SAFI/SAI/SNI, option is a time bound exercise for fixation of Pay and once exercised, it is considered final as per Govt Rules. At time, Govt grants special sanction to re-exercise the option within a specified time period. Service personnel who could not exercise most beneficial option during 6th CPC while migration to 6th CPC or afterwards in the currency of 6th CPC went to Hon'ble AFTs and represented their cases from 2018 onwards.*
- 2. The Hon'ble AFT Principal Bench, Delhi on hearing the case in OA No.1182/2018 applicant Sub ML Shrivastava (Retd) &)Ors ordered that their order will be applicable in rem to alls such affected personnel. In accordance with ibid court order, the Air Force Competent Authority gave sanction for all the affected service personnel whose pay has been fixed as on 01 Jan 2006, including those who have retired and directed to re-fix their*

pay with the most beneficial option withal consequent benefits, including re-fixing of their pay in the 7th CPC and Pension wherever applicable.

- 3. After issue of said OA, FCAO extended the benefits to the affected Airmen in the IRLA of Nov. 24, and Dec 23. Meanwhile AFCAO received individual court orders of other Air Force applicants on similar subject who were also given the benefits in consonance with court order with/without sanction depending upon the receipt of order keeping the spirit of OA(in rem).*
- 4. The complete IRLA sets were forwarded to O/o JCDA(AF) for Audit at NE Stage. However, the O/o JCDA(AF) has returned all sets where the benefits in consonance with ibid court order were accorded. It is pertinent to mention that the O/o JCDA(AF) is not in agreement with the initial sanction of Air Force Competent Authority which very clearly brought out that the given sanction is for all Air Force Personnel and accordingly, AFCAO extended the benefits to all affected personnel. This was also communicated to JCDA(AF) through various correspondences and meetings with a request to review the observation and clear the cases considering NE priority. However, O/o JCDA(AF) maintained its stand insisting on requirement of court orders and specific sanctions.*
- 5. Keeping in view of audit contention, and to avoid delay in issuance of PPO involving huge value of all affected individuals, AFCAO was forced to undertake reversion of all the actioned most beneficial cases. On receipt of the specific sanction from the Air HQ at a later stage, the same will be auctioned in Corrigendum PPO. The recovery amount will be reflected in the PPO of the concerned Air Warriors for further action.*

6. *This is for your information please*"

The applicant submits that he could not exercise the option during the 6th CPC in time whereas his juniors whose basic pay has been fixed higher had exercised the Option-I during the transition period of the 6th CPC on promotion to the rank of LAC wef 01.10.2006 in time. The applicant further submits that though he exercised the option for fixation of his basic pay as per the SAFI guidelines, however his option was not acted upon at the time of the implementation of the 6th CPC wef 01.01.2006 due to late submission of option form and hence the default option was selected by the respondents for fixation of his basic pay and this action on the part of the respondents is violation of the Para 14(b)(iv) of SAI 1/S/2008 which stipulates that if no option is exercised by the individual, the PAO(OR) will regulate fixation on promotion by ensuring that the most beneficial is allowed to the PBOR and it has been judicially affirmed by the Armed Forces Tribunal(PB), New Delhi in OA

1182/2028- titled *Sub Mahendra Lal Shrivastava (Retd) Vs Union of India & Ors.*

3. The applicant has relied upon the order of the Armed Forces Tribunal(PB) dated 03.09.2021 passed in the case of *Sub M .L. Shrivastava & Ors. Vs Union of India & Ors.* in OA 1182/2018 and a catena of other orders of the Armed Forces Tribunal.
4. The Hon'ble Supreme Court vide judgment dated 17.12.1996 in the case of *Union of India & Ors Vs P Jagdish and Ors(SLP(C) No.020470/1995* has observed that the principle of stepping up prevents violation of the principle of "equal pay for equal work". Applying the same principle of law here, a service personnel in the same rank cannot be allowed to draw a salary higher than his batchmate because that would be against the ethos of Article 39(d) of the Constitution which envisages the principle of "equal pay for equal work". Hence granting of stepping up is the only way out to remove the said anomaly, which results in a service

personnel drawing a higher salary in the same rank than his batchmate. The only way to remove this anomaly is the stepping up of the salary of aggrieved personnel at par with other service personnel in the same rank. The rules and provisions which allow the said anomaly to exist and prohibit the stepping up are violative of the principle of natural justice and equity; and contrary to Article 39(d) of the Constitution which envisages "equal pay for equal work" and contrary to the principle of law laid down by the Apex Court in its pronouncements.

5. We have examined numerous cases pertaining to the incorrect pay fixation in 6th CPC in respect of Officers/JCOs/ORs merely on the grounds of option not being exercised in the stipulated time or applicants not exercising the option at all, and have issued orders that in all these cases the petitioners' pay is to be re-fixed with the most beneficial option as stipulated in Para 14 of the SAI 1/S/2008 dated 11.10.2008. The matter of

incorrect pay-fixation and providing the most beneficial option in the case of JCOs/ORs has been exhaustively examined in the case of Sub M.L. Shrivastava and Ors Vs. Union of India [O.A No.1182 of 2018] decided on 03.09.2021.

6. Similarly, in the matter of incorrect pay fixation in the 7th CPC, the issue has been exhaustively examined in Sub Ramjeevan Kumar Singh Vs. Union of India [O.A. No.2000/2021] decided on 27.09.2021. Relevant portions are extracted below:

"12. Notwithstanding the absence of the option clause in 7th CPC, this Bench has repeatedly held that a soldier cannot be drawing less pay than his junior, or be placed in a pay scale/band which does not offer the most beneficial pay scale, for the only reason that the soldier did not exercise the required option for pay fixation, or exercised it late. We have no hesitation in concluding that even under the 7th CPC, it remains the responsibility of the Respondents; in particular the PAO (OR), to ensure that a soldier's pay is fixed in the most beneficial manner.

13. *In view of the foregoing, we allow the OA and direct the Respondents to:-*

(a) Take necessary action to amend the Extraordinary Gazette Notification NO SRO 9E dated 03.05.2017 and include a suitable 'most beneficial' option clause, similar to the 6th CPC. A Report to be submitted within three months of this order.

(b) Review the pay fixed of the applicant on his promotion to Naib Subedar in the 7th CPC, and after due verification re-fix his pay in a manner that is most beneficial to the applicant, while ensuring that he does not draw less pay than his juniors.

(c) Issue all arrears within three months of this order and submit a compliance report.

(d) *Issue all arrears within three months of this order and submit a compliance report."*

7. In respect of officers, the cases pertaining to pay-anomaly have also been examined in detail by the Tribunal in the case of *Lt Col Karan Dusad Vs. Union of India and others* [O.A. No.868 of 2020 and connected matters] decided on 05.08.2022. In that case, we have directed CGDA/CDA(O) to issue necessary instructions to review pay- fixation of all officers of all the three Services, whose pay has been fixed on 01.01.2006 in 6th CPC and provide them the most beneficial option.

Relevant extracts are given below:

"102 (a) to (j) xxx

(k) The pay fixation of all the officers, of all the three Services (Army, Navy and Air Force), whose pay has been fixed as on 01.01.2006 merely because they did not exercise an option/ exercised it after the stipulated time be reviewed by CGDA/ CDA(O), and the benefit of the most beneficial option be extended to these officers, with all consequential benefits, including to those who have retired. The CGDA to issue necessary instructions for the review and implementation.

Directions

103. xxx


104. *We, however, direct the CGDA/CDA(O) to review and verify the pay fixation of all those officers, of all the three Services (Army, Navy and Air Force), whose pay has been fixed as on 01.01.2006, including those who have retired, and re-fix their pay with the most beneficial option, with all consequential benefits, including re-fixing of their pay in the 7th CPC and pension wherever applicable. The CGDA to issue necessary instructions for this review and its implementation.*

Respondents are directed to complete this review and file a detailed compliance report within four months of this order."

8. In the light of the above considerations, the OA 3653/2025 is allowed and the respondents are directed

to:

- (a) Review the pay fixed of the applicant under the 6th CPC after due verification in a manner that is most beneficial to the applicant while ensuring that the applicant is not drawing less pay than his course-mate/junior.
 - (b) Thereafter, re-fix the applicant's pay on transition to 7th CPC and subsequent promotion(s) in a most beneficial manner.
 - (c) To pay the arrears within three months of this order.
9. No order as to costs.


(JUSTICE ANU MALHOTRA)
(MEMBER(J))


(LT GEN C P MOHANTY)
(MEMBER (A))

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