

Ex-servicemen are a national asset, bringing decades of experience, leadership, discipline & strategic thinking to society: Raksha Mantri

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Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh addressed the National Conclave 2025 organized by the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare (DESW) under the Ministry of Defence at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi on September 29, 2025, underscoring the government’s commitment to the welfare, rehabilitation, and reintegration of ex-servicemen. The two-day conclave on the theme ‘Viksit Bharat and Ex-Servicemen Welfare’ brings together representatives from District and State Sainik Boards, the Directorate General Resettlement (DGR), ECHS, and various central government departments to deliberate on policies, initiatives, and schemes aimed at improving the lives of veterans and their families. The event reflects the principles of the ‘Whole of Government Approach’ and cooperative federalism, emphasising the importance of collaboration between central and state governments to achieve holistic development and welfare outcomes for ex-servicemen.

Shri Rajnath Singh emphasised that the achievements of Ex-Servicemen inspire not only fellow veterans but also the youth to serve the nation with dedication and integrity. “Ex-servicemen are a national asset, bringing decades of experience, leadership, discipline & strategic thinking to society. Their continued engagement in social & economic initiatives strengthen communities and the nation as a whole,” he added.

Shri Rajnath Singh highlighted the critical role of veterans in guiding youth, preventing social disintegration, and addressing challenges such as drug abuse. Veterans’ experience, discipline, and leadership equip them to influence communities positively and their engagement helps ensure that young people are steered toward productive and responsible paths.

Raksha Mantri also emphasised the broader societal role of veterans, stating that they serve as catalysts for social change. He highlighted veterans' contributions in community development, public participation projects, environmental conservation, and guiding the youth. Drawing on examples of villagers working collectively to build ponds or temples, he underscored that veterans can mobilise communities and foster unity, social cohesion, and participatory governance, particularly in areas where government reach may be limited. "Veterans, play a pivotal role in fostering trust, unity, and collaboration within societies, thereby reinforcing societal resilience and stability," he added.

Raksha Mantri emphasised the significance of collaborative governance, citing examples of successful national initiatives such as the GST implementation, the world's largest COVID-19 vaccination campaign, the Swachh Bharat Mission and the Ayushman Bharat Yojana. He underscored that such initiatives succeeded because of coordinated action between the Centre and state governments, demonstrating how effective cooperation transforms ambitious objectives into tangible results. He stated that similar collaboration in the field of veteran welfare can yield meaningful outcomes and set new benchmarks for policy implementation.

Raksha Mantri also lauded the entrepreneurial and social contributions of veterans who continue to serve the nation after retirement. "Many veterans present at the event have not only served the nation in uniform but also continued their service through their actions even after retirement. Our veterans have truly embodied the motto *Once a soldier, always a soldier*," he added.

Acknowledging challenges faced by veterans, Raksha Mantri highlighted how issues such as pension-related concerns, limited healthcare facilities, and restricted employment opportunities are being addressed. "Under the leadership of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Government is committed to addressing these challenges through modern technology and streamlined processes, including initiatives such as Smart Canteen Cards, Ex-Servicemen Identity Cards, online access to DGR services, and the SPARSH portal for pension management," he said. Shri Rajnath Singh stated that these measures aim to simplify administrative processes, enhance transparency, and ensure that veterans & their families have easy access to essential services.

Raksha Mantri emphasised that the welfare of veterans and their families remain a top priority of the government. He commended the organizers of the conclave for facilitating discussions on veterans' issues and encouraged all stakeholders, including policymakers, community leaders, and society at large, to support ex-servicemen in leveraging their skills, experience, and leadership for the greater good.

The initial session, presided over by Secretary (DESW) Shri Niten Chandra, featured substantive deliberations on critical agenda points, followed by presentations from various RSBs showcasing effective welfare methodologies and good practices from across the country. Shri Niten Chandra expressed confidence that the conclave would positively shape the policies and influence the lives of ex-servicemen in the years to come.

The programme also featured the screening of a motivational film, a recognition ceremony felicitating top-performing RSBs and deserving ESM awardees, and the formal release of several DESW guidebooks to further strengthen the framework of ex-servicemen welfare. Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, Financial Advisor (Defence Services) Dr. Mayank Sharma, veterans and senior officials of MoD were also present on the occasion.

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