

Court No. 1**ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL, REGIONAL BENCH, LUCKNOW****ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 999 of 2024**Tuesday, this the 1st day of April, 2025**“Hon’ble Mr. Justice Anil Kumar, Member (J)
Hon’ble Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain, Member (A)”**

JC-701749-H Ex Sub Rameshwar Kumar Pandey
 S/o Late Krishna Nand Pandey
 R/o House No. 592D/20, Rajiv Nagar (Ghosiyana) Post: Kharika,
 Telibagh, Lucknow – 226029 (UP)

..... Applicant

Ld. Counsel for the : **Shri R. Chandra**, Advocate
 Applicant

Versus

1. Union of India, through the Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, New Delhi – 110011.
2. Chief of the Army Staff, IHQ of MoD (Army), DHQ Post Office, New Delhi – 110011.
3. The Officer-in-Charge, Army Medical Corps Records Office, Lucknow – 226002.
4. The PCDA (Pension), Draupadi Ghat, Allahabad-14 (UP).

.....Respondents

Ld. Counsel for the : **Mrs Anju Singh**, Advocate
 Respondents Central Govt. Counsel

ORDER**“Per Hon’ble Mr. Justice Anil Kumar, Member (J)”**

1. The instant Original Application has been filed under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007 for the following reliefs :-

(I) *The Hon'ble Tribunal may be pleased to set aside the order dated 04/01/2024 (Annexure No 1) and order dated 06/06/2024 (Annexure No A-2).*

(II) *The Hon'ble Tribunal may be pleased to direct the respondents to grant disability element with effect from 01/01/2024 (Next date of discharge) along with its arrears and interest thereon at the rate of 18% per annum.*

(III) *Hon'ble Tribunal may be pleased further to grant benefit of rounding of disability pension @ 50 percent in terms of Ram Avtar's case.*

(IV) *Any other appropriate order or direction which the Hon'ble Tribunal may deem just and proper in the nature and circumstances of the case.*

2. Briefly stated, applicant was initially enrolled in the Indian Army 25.12.1993 and was discharged on 31.12.2023 (AN) on completion of terms of engagement in Low Medical Category under Rule 13 (3) Item I (i) (a) of the Army Rules, 1954. At the time of discharge from service, the Release Medical Board (RMB) held at Command Hospital, Lucknow on 26.06.2023 assessed his disabilities, (i) **"FRACTURE DISTAL RADIOUS B/L"**, assessed @ 20% for life and opined as attributable to military service and (ii) **"CHRONIC OPEN ANGLE GLAUCOMA BE"**, assessed @ 15% for life and opined as aggravated by military service and composite assessment @ 32% for life. The disability claim of the applicant was however rejected by the competent authority, i.e. OIC Records, Army Medical Corps Record Office, Lucknow treating first disability as neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service and second disability below 20% vide AMC Records letter

dated 04.01.2024. The applicant preferred first appeal dated 06.02.2024 which was also rejected by the Appellate Committee vide letter dated 06.06.2024. It is in this perspective that the applicant has preferred the present Original Application.

3. Ld. Counsel for the applicant submitted that the applicant's first disability, "FRACTURE DISTAL RADIOUS B/L)" was assessed @ 20% for life as attributable to military service and second disability, "CHRONIC OPEN ANGLE GLAUCOMA BE" was assessed @ 15% for life as aggravated by military service and composite assessment @ 32% for life. He further pleaded that at the time of enrolment, the applicant was found mentally and physically fit for service in the Army and there is no note in the service documents that he was suffering from any disease at the time of enrolment in Army. He further submitted that competent authority, i.e. AMC Records in this case, has no authority to overrule the opinion of RMB. He placed reliance on the judgment of the Hon'ble Apex Court in the case of **Dharamvir Singh vs. Union of India & Ors**, 2013 AIR SCW 4236 and **Sukhvinder Singh vs. Union of India & Ors**, reported in (2014) STPL (WEB) 468 SC and pleaded that various Benches of Armed Forces Tribunal have granted disability pension in similar cases, as such the applicant be granted disability element of pension and its rounding off to 50% for life.

4. Ld. Counsel for the respondents submitted that disability pension claim of the applicant has been rejected by the pension

sanctioning authority, i.e. OIC Records, Army Medical Corps Record Office, Lucknow stating that case is unfit for admission of disability pension, treating first disability as neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service and second disability below 20% vide AMC Records letter dated 04.01.2024. Hence, under the provisions of Regulation 53 (a) of the pension Regulations for the Army, 2008 (Part-1), the applicant is not entitled to disability pension. She pleaded for dismissal of the Original Application.

5. We have heard Ld. Counsel for the applicant as also Ld. Counsel for the respondents. We have also gone through the records and we find that the questions which need to be answered are of two folds:-

- (a) Whether the competent authority, i.e. OIC AMC Records, Lucknow has authority to overrule the opinion of RMB?
- (b) Whether the applicant is entitled for the benefit of rounding off the disability pension?

6. This is a case where the disabilities of the applicant have been held as attributable to/aggravated by military service by the RMB. The RMB assessed first disability of the applicant @ 20% for life and second disability @ 15% for life, composite assessment @ 32% for life. However, the opinion of the RMB has been overruled by the pension sanctioning authority, i.e. OIC AMC Records and

the disabilities of the applicant have been regarded as neither attributable to or aggravated by military service.

7. The issue of sanctity of the opinion of a Release Medical Board and its overruling by a higher formation is no more Res Integra. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Ex. Sapper Mohinder Singh vs. Union of India & Others**, in Civil Appeal No.164 of 1993, decided on 14.01.1993, has made it clear that without physical medical examination of a patient, a higher formation cannot overrule the opinion of a Medical Board. Thus, in light of the observations made by the Hon'ble Apex Court in the case of **Ex Sapper Mohinder Singh vs. Union of India & Others**, we are of the considered opinion that the decision of competent authority i.e. OIC AMC Records, Luckinow over ruling the opinion of RMB held on 26.06.2023 is void in law. The relevant part of the aforesaid judgment is quoted below:-

“From the above narrated facts and the stand taken by the parties before us, the controversy that falls for determination by us is in a very narrow compass viz. whether the Chief Controller of Defence Accounts (Pension) has any jurisdiction to sit over the opinion of the experts (Medical Board) while dealing with the case of grant of disability pension, in regard to the percentage of the disability pension, or not. In the present case, it is nowhere stated that the Applicant was subjected to any higher medical Board before the Chief Controller of Defence Accounts (Pension) decided to decline the disability pension to the Applicant. We are unable to see as to how the accounts branch dealing with the pension can sit over the judgment of the experts in the medical line without making any reference to a detailed or higher Medical Board which can be constituted under the relevant

instructions and rules by the Director General of Army Medical Core.”

8. Thus in light of the aforesaid judgment (supra) as well as IHQ of MoD (Army) letter dated 25.04.2011 it is clear that the disability assessed by RMB cannot be reduced/overruled by the competent authority/pension sanctioning authority, therefore, the decision of the OIC AMC Records, Lucknow is void. Hence, we are of the opinion that the disabilities of the applicant should be considered as attributable/aggravated by military service as have been opined by the RMB.

9. The law on the point of rounding off of disability pension is no more RES INTEGRA in view of Hon'ble Supreme Court judgment in the case of ***Union of India and Ors vs Ram Avtar & ors*** (Civil Appeal No 418 of 2012 decided on 10th December 2014). In this Judgment the Hon'ble Apex Court nodded in disapproval of the policy of the Government of India in granting the benefit of rounding off of disability pension only to the personnel who have been invalided out of service and denying the same to the personnel who have retired on attaining the age of superannuation or on completion of their tenure of engagement. The relevant portion of the decision is excerpted below:-

“4. By the present set of appeals, the appellant (s) raise the question, whether or not, an individual, who has retired on attaining the age of superannuation or on completion of his tenure of engagement, if found to be suffering from some disability which is attributable to or aggravated by the military service, is entitled to be granted the benefit of

rounding off of disability pension. The appellant(s) herein would contend that, on the basis of Circular No 1(2)/97/D (Pen-C) issued by the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, dated 31.01.2001, the aforesaid benefit is made available only to an Armed Forces Personnel who is invalidated out of service, and not to any other category of Armed Forces Personnel mentioned hereinabove.

5. *We have heard Learned Counsel for the parties to the lis.*

6. *We do not see any error in the impugned judgment (s) and order(s) and therefore, all the appeals which pertain to the concept of rounding off of the disability pension are dismissed, with no order as to costs.*

7. *The dismissal of these matters will be taken note of by the High Courts as well as by the Tribunals in granting appropriate relief to the pensioners before them, if any, who are getting or are entitled to the disability pension.*

8. *This Court grants six weeks' time from today to the appellant(s) to comply with the orders and directions passed by us."*

10. Additionally, consequent upon the issue of Government of India, Ministry of Defence letter No. 17(01)/2017(01)/D(Pen/Policy) dated 23.01.2018, Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Prayagraj has issued Circular No. 596 dated 09.02.2018 wherein it is provided that the cases where Armed Forces Pensioners who were retired/discharged voluntary or otherwise with disability and they were in receipt of Disability/War Injury Element as on 31.12.2015, their extent of disability/War Injury Element shall be re-computed in the manner given in the said Circular which is applicable with effect from 01.01.2016.

11. As such, in view of the decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Ram Avtar (supra)** as well as Government of India,

Ministry of Defence letter dated 23.01.2018, we are of the considered view that benefit of rounding off of disability pension @ 32% for life to be rounded off to 50% for life may be extended to the applicant from the next date of discharge from service.

12. In view of the above, the **Original Application No. 999 of 2024** deserves to be allowed, hence **allowed**. The impugned orders, rejecting the applicant's claim for grant of disability element of disability pension, are set aside. The disabilities of the applicant are held as attributable/aggravated by Military Service as have been opined by RMB. The applicant is entitled to get disability element @32% for life which would be rounded off to 50% for life from the next date of his discharge from service. The respondents are directed to grant disability element to the applicant @32% for life which would stand rounded off to 50% for life from the next date of his discharge from service. The respondents are directed to give effect to this order within a period of four months from the date of receipt of a certified copy of this order. Default will invite interest @ 8% per annum till actual payment.

13. No order as to costs.

(Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain)
Member (A)

(Justice Anil Kumar)
Member (J)

Dated : 1st April, 2025
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