

**Court No. 1****ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL, REGIONAL BENCH, LUCKNOW****ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 1291 of 2023**Monday, this the 29<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2024**“Hon’ble Mr. Justice Anil Kumar, Member (J)  
Hon’ble Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain, Member (A)”**

JC-185329N Sub. & Hony. Capt. Shri Niwas Sharma (Retd.),  
Son of Late Sri Kishan Prasad Sharma, resident of D-159, AWHO  
Colony, Tyagi Vihar, Lucknow-226002.

**..... Applicant**

Ld. Counsel for the : **Shri Ravi Kumar Yadava**, Advocate  
Applicant Holding brief of  
**Col. H.M. Maheshwari (Veteran)**, Advocate

Versus

1. Union of India, through the Secretary, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi-110001.
2. Chief of the Army Staff, Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence, South Block, New Delhi-110001.
3. The Adjutant General, Adjutant General’s Branch, IHQ of MoD (Army), DHQ PO, New Delhi-110011.
4. The Officer in Charge Records, Army Educational Corps, PIN-908777, C/o 56 APO.
5. Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Draupadi Ghat, Allahabad, PIN-211014.

**.....Respondents**

Ld. Counsel for the : **Shri Anurag Mishra**, Advocate  
Respondents. Central Govt. Standing 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:-

- (a) *To quash and set aside the CDA (P) Allahabad (UP) letter No. G-3/93/1816/99 dated 15.09.1999.*
- (b) *To quash and set aside the ADGPS IHQ of MOD letter no. B/40502/610/2021/AG/PS-4 (1<sup>st</sup> Appeal) dated 09.02.2023 and direct the respondents to allow the disability pension from the time applicant was invalidated out from service i.e. 30 Apr 1999 with an interest @10% per annum with all consequential benefits.*
- (c) *To direct the respondents to grant the benefit of rounding off both the disabilities from 30% to 50% and pay arrears with an interest @10% per annum from the date of Invalidated out i.e. 30 Apr 1999.*
- (d) *To direct the respondents to hold Re-Survey Medical Board (RSMB) to assess present medical disabilities along with disability for intervening period and continue disability pension as per RSMB.*
- (e) *Any other relief which this Hon’ble Tribunal may deem fit and proper in the facts and circumstances of the case.*
- (f) *Award Cost.*

2. Briefly stated, applicant was initially enrolled in the Army Education Corps of Indian Army 23.01.1971 and discharged on 30.04.1999 (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 170 Military Hospital on in January, 1999 assessed his disability ‘**PRIMARY HYPERTENSION (401)**’ @30% for two years and opined the disability to be **Aggravated by**

military service. The disability claim of the applicant was however rejected by the Principal Controller of Defence Account (Pensions), Allahabad vide letter dated 15.09.1999 on the ground that the disability of the applicant was neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service which was communicated to the applicant vide letter dated 27.09.1999. The applicant preferred representation dated 12.04.2016 but of no avail. The applicant preferred First Appeal dated 07.08.2017 but when it was not decided the applicant preferred Original Application No. 27 of 2018 before this Tribunal which was disposed off with direction to the respondents to decide the applicant's First Appeal dated 07.08.2017 on merits by a reasoned and speaking order vide order dated 02.02.2021. Thereafter, the applicant's First Appeal was rejected by the respondents vide their letter dated 09.02.2023. The applicant preferred Second Appeal dated 03.04.2023 which too was rejected vide letter dated . 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 disability was found to be **aggravated by** military service vide RMB which had also assessed the disability @30% for two years. He further submitted that Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pension), Allahabad has no authority to overrule the opinion of RMB. He pleaded that various Benches of Armed Forces Tribunal have granted disability pension in similar cases, as such the applicant be granted disability pension and its rounding off to 50%.

4. Ld. Counsel for the respondents conceded that disability of the applicant @30% for two years has been regarded as **aggravated by** the RMB, but pension sanctioning authority i.e. Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad has rejected the claim of the applicant on the ground that the disability of the applicant is neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service, hence as per Regulation 173 of the Pension Regulations for the Army, 1961 (Part-I) the applicant is not entitled to disability pension. He 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 two folds:-

(a) Whether the Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad has authority to overrule the opinion of RMB?

(b) Whether the applicant is entitled for the benefit of rounding off the disability element of disability pension?

6. This is a case where the disability of the applicant has been held as aggravated by military service by the RMB. The RMB assessed the disability @30% for two years. However, the opinion of the RMB has been overruled by Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad and the disability has 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 Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad over ruling the opinion of RMB held in January, 1999 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 Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pension), Allahabad, hence the decision of Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad is void. Hence, we are of the opinion that the disability of the applicant should be considered as aggravated by military service as has 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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/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 ***Union of India and Ors vs Ram Avtar & ors (supra)*** as well as Government of India, Ministry of Defence letter No.17(01)/2017/D(Pen/Policy) dated 23.01.2018, we are of the considered view that benefit of rounding off of disability pension @30% for two years to be rounded off to 50% for two years may be extended to the applicant from the next date of his discharge.

12. The applicant's RMB was valid for two years from the next date of his discharge. Although the applicant was discharged from on 30.04.1999 but considering that applicant's disability was regarded as aggravated by military service by the RMB and applicant was taking frequent treatment for the aforesaid disability vide Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme OPD Receipt – Polyclinic (Lucknow) dated 17.03.2023, we are of the opinion that the respondents will now have to conduct a fresh Re-Survey Medical Board for him to decide his future eligibility to disability element of disability pension.

13. In view of the above, the **Original Application No. 1291 of 2022** 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 disability of the applicant is held as aggravated by Military Service as has been opined by RMB. The applicant is entitled to get disability element @30% for two years which would be rounded off to 50% for two years from the next date of his discharge. The respondents are directed to



grant disability element to the applicant @30% for two years which would stand rounded off to 50% for two years from the next date of his discharge. The respondents are further directed to conduct a Re-Survey Medical Board for the applicant to assess his further entitlement of disability element of disability pension. 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.

14. No order as to costs.

**(Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain)**  
**Member (A)**

**(Justice Anil Kumar)**  
**Member (J)**

Dated : 29 April, 2024

AKD/-