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* IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI

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Date of Decision : 21.01.2026

+ **W.P.(C) 839/2026**

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

.....Petitioners
Through: Mr. Nishant Gautam CGSC and Ms. Kavya Shukla Adv.

versus

GP CAPT (TS) ANIL SHARMA (RETD) (18911)Respondent

Through: Mr. Baljeet Singh, Ms. Deepika Sheoran and Mr. Abhishek Gahlyan, Advs.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE V. KAMESWAR RAO

HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE MANMEET PRITAM SINGH ARORA

V. KAMESWAR RAO, J. (ORAL)

CM APPL. 4115/2026 (Exemption)

1. Allowed, subject to all just exceptions.
2. The application stands disposed of.

W.P.(C) 839/2026 & CM APPL. 4114/2026

3. This petition lays a challenge to the order dated 26.09.2023 passed by the Armed Forces Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi in Original Application No. 1156/2019 ('OA'), whereby the Tribunal, has allowed the OA by stating in paragraphs 7 & 8, which we reproduced as under:-

"7. In view of the aforesaid judicial pronouncements and the parameters referred to above, the applicant is entitled for



disability element of pension in respect of disability 'Primary Hypertension (Old)'. Accordingly, we allow this application holding that the applicant is entitled to disability element of pension @ 30% for the disability of Primary Hypertension (Old) rounded off to 50% for life with effect from the date of his discharge in terms of the judicial pronouncement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of Union of India Vs. Ram Avtar (Civil Appeal No. 418/2012), decided on 10.12.2014.

8. The respondents are thus directed to calculate, sanction and issue the necessary PPO to the applicant within a period of three months from the date of re/t of copy of this order and the amount of arrears shall be paid by the respondents, failing which the applicant will be entitled for interest @ 6% p.a. from the date of receipt of copy of the order by the respondents.”

4. The submission made by the learned counsel for the petitioners is by referring to the opinion of the Release Medical Board ('RMB') wherein, the RMB has stated that the disability of hypertension is neither attributable nor aggravated by the service.

5. In fact, it is stated that it is a lifestyle related disorder and the onset of the disability was at a peace station. The law in this regard is well settled in the judgment of this Court in the case of **Union of India & Ors. v. 1481129-P (Ex) Hav Ram Kumar, 2026:DHC:197-DB** where in paragraphs 9, 10 & 13 it is held as under:-

“9. In W.P.(C) 88/2026 titled Union of India v. 781466 Ex. SGT Krishna Kumar Dwivedi, decided by this Bench on 06.01.2026, our attention was drawn to the authoritative judgments of the coordinate Benches of this Court passed in W.P.(C) 3545/2025 titled Union of India v. Ex. Sub Gawas Anil Madso, 2025: DHC: 2021-DB and W.P.(C) 140/2024 titled Union of India vs. Col. Balbir Singh (Retd.) and other connected matters, 2025: DHC: 5082-DB, which have conclusively held that even under 2008 Entitlement Rules, an officer who suffers from a disease at the time of his release and



applies for disability pension within 15 years from release of service, is ordinarily entitled to disability pension and he does not have any onus to prove the said entitlement. The 2008 Entitlement Rules, however, contemplate that in the event the Medical Board concludes that the disease though contracted during the tenure of military service, was not attributable to or aggravated by military service, it would have to give cogent reasons and identify the cause, other than military service, to which the ailment or disability can be attributed. The judgments hold that a bald statement in the report would not be sufficient, for the military department for denying the claim of disability pension. The burden to prove the disentitlement therefore remains on the military department even under 2008 Entitlement Rules and the aforesaid judgments emphasize on the significance of the Medical Board giving specific reasons for denial of this beneficial provision. The judgments hold that the onus to prove a casual connection between the disability and military service is not on the officer but on the administration.

10. We for benefit also note that the Supreme Court in its recent opinion in the case of *Bijender Singh vs. Union of India and Others, 2025 SCC OnLine SC 895*, wherein at paragraphs 45.1, 46 and 47, the Supreme Court held as under:

“45.1. Thus, this Court held that essence of the Rules is that a member of the armed forces is presumed to be in sound physical and mental condition at the time of his entry into the service if there is no note or record to the contrary made at the time of such entry. In the event of subsequent discharge from service on medical ground, any deterioration in health would be presumed to be due to military service. The burden would be on the employer to rebut the presumption that the disability suffered by the member was neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service. If the Medical Board is of the opinion that the disease suffered by the member could not have been detected at the time of entry into service, the Medical Board has to give reasons for saying so. This Court



highlighted that the provision for payment of disability pension is a beneficial one which ought to be interpreted liberally. A soldier cannot be asked to prove that the disease was contracted by him on account of military service or was aggravated by the same. The very fact that upon proper physical and other tests, the member was found fit to serve in the army would give rise to a presumption that he was disease free at the time of his entry into service. For the employer to say that such a disease was neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service, the least that is required to be done is to furnish reasons for taking such a view.

46. Referring back to the impugned order dated 26.02.2016, we find that the Tribunal simply went by the remarks of the Invaliding Medical Board and Re-Survey Medical Boards to hold that since the disability of the appellant was less than 20%, he would not be entitled to the disability element of the disability pension. Tribunal did not examine the issue as to whether the disability was attributable to or aggravated by military service. In the instant case neither has it been mentioned by the Invaliding Medical Board nor by the Re-Survey Medical Boards that the disease for which the appellant was invalidated out of service could not be detected at the time of entry into military service. As a matter of fact, the Invaliding Medical Board was quite categorical that no disability of the appellant existed before entering service. As would be evident from the aforesaid decisions of this Court, the law has by now crystallized that if there is no note or report of the Medical Board at the time of entry into service that the member suffered from any particular disease, the presumption would be that the member got afflicted by the said disease because of military service. Therefore the burden of proving that the disease is not attributable to or aggravated by military service rest entirely on the employer. Further, any disease or disability for which a member of the armed forces is invalidated out of service would have to be assumed to be above 20% and attract grant of 50% disability pension.



47. *Thus having regard to the discussions made above, we are of the considered view that the impugned orders of the Tribunal are wholly unsustainable in law. That being the position, impugned orders dated 22.01.2018 and 26.02.2016 are hereby set aside. Consequently, respondents are directed to grant the disability element of disability pension to the appellant at the rate of 50% with effect from 01.01.1996 onwards for life. The arrears shall carry interest at the rate of 6% per annum till payment. The above directions shall be carried out by the respondents within three months from today.”*

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13. At this juncture it would be apposite to refer to the judgment of the coordinate Bench of this Court in *Union of India v. Col. Balbir Singh (Retd.) (supra)*, wherein the Court emphasized on the significance of the Release Medical Board recording clear and cogent reasons for denying the entitlement of disability pension to the officer. The relevant paragraphs of the said judgment are as under: -

“50. In this regard, it is further relevant to note the observations of the Supreme Court in the *Rajumon T.M. v. Union of India &Ors.*, 2025 SCC OnLine SC 1064, the relevant portions of which reads as under:

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25. We, therefore, hold that if any action is taken by the authority for the discharge of a serviceman and the serviceman is denied disability pension on the basis of a report of the Medical Board wherein no reasons have been disclosed for the opinion so given, such an action of the authority will be unsustainable in law.”

51. In view of the above, it is essential for the Medical Boards to record and specify the reasons for their opinion as to whether the disability is to be treated as attributable to or aggravated by military service, especially when the pensionary benefits of the Force personnel are at stake.

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53. *Particularly in this milieu, it is of paramount importance that Medical Boards record clear and cogent reasons in support of their medical opinions. Such reasoning would not only enhance transparency but also assist the Competent Authority in adjudicating these matters with greater precision, ensuring that no prejudice is caused to either party.*

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56. *It must always be kept in view that the Armed Forces personnel, in defending this great nation from external threats, have to perform their duties in most harsh and inhuman weather and conditions, be it on far-flung corner of land, in terrains and atmosphere where limits of man's survival are tested, or in air or water, where again surviving each day is a challenge, away from the luxury of family life and comforts. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the RMB to furnish cogent and well-reasoned justification for their conclusions that the disease/disability suffered by the personnel cannot be said to be attributable to or aggravated by such service conditions. This onus is not discharged by the RMB by simply relying on when such disability/disease is noticed first.*

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77. Thus, in view of the above, the RMB must not resort to a vague and stereotyped approach but should engage in a comprehensive, logical, and rational analysis of the service and medical records of the personnel, and must record well-reasoned findings while discharging the onus placed upon it.”

(Emphasis Supplied)

6. We find that the RMB has not given any reasons to hold that the disability is neither attributable to nor aggravated by the service. In fact, there is no reason to show as to how the disability is attributable to lifestyle.

7. In view of the settled position of law and the fact that there are no reasons given by the RMB, we are of view that the Tribunal is justified in



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coming to the conclusion that the respondent is entitled to grant of the disability pension.

8. In view of the above, this petition is dismissed.

V. KAMESWAR RAO, J

MANMEET PRITAM SINGH ARORA, J

JANUARY 21, 2026/rk