



Policy for Declassification of War History

Why in News

The Union Defence Minister has approved a **policy on archiving, declassification, compilation and publication of war and operations histories** by the **Ministry of Defence (MoD)**.

Key Points

▪ Desirability of Authoritative Record:

- Timely publication of war histories **would give people an accurate account of the events**, provide **authentic material for academic research** and **counter the unfounded rumours**.
- The requirement of having war histories written with clear cut policy on declassification was recommended by the [Kargil Review Committee, 2019](#) headed by **K Subrahmanyam** to analyse the lessons learnt and prevent future mistakes.
- **Post [Kargil conflict](#), a Group of Ministers (GoM) recommendations on national security, 2001** also mentioned the desirability of an authoritative war history.

▪ Provisions of Policy:

- **Transfer of Record: Each organisation under the MoD** such as **Services (Army, Airforce and Navy), [Integrated Defence Staff](#), [Assam Rifles](#) and [Coast Guard](#)**, will transfer the records, including war diaries, letters of proceedings and operational record books, etc., **to the history division of MoD** for proper upkeep, archival and writing the histories.
 - The **History Division** will be responsible for coordination with various departments while compiling, seeking approval and publishing of war and operations histories.
- **Constitution of a Committee:** For compilation of war and operations histories, the policy mandates the constitution of a committee headed by Joint Secretary, MoD and composed of **representatives of the Services, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** and other organisations and **prominent military historians**, if required.
- **Timeline:** The policy sets clear timelines with regard to compilation and publication of war and operations histories.
 - The **committee should be formed within two years** of completion of war and operations.
 - Thereafter, collection of records and **compilation should be completed in three years** and disseminated to all concerned.
 - The records **should ordinarily be declassified** (i.e. no more secret) in **25 years**.
 - **Records older than 25 years** should be appraised by archival experts and transferred to the **National Archives of India** once the war/operations histories have been compiled.
- **Responsibility for Declassification of Records:** This rests with the respective organisations as specified in the **Public Record Act 1993** and the **Public Record Rules 1997**.

- **For Internal Consumption First:** The compiled history on wars and operations, within five years, will be for internal consumption first, and **later the committee may decide to publicly release whole or parts of it**, considering the sensitivity of the subject.
- **Declassification of Older Wars:**
 - The declassification of older wars like the [1962 war](#) and [Operation Bluestar](#) is not automatic and will be taken up on a case by case basis by a committee to be constituted under the new policy.

[Source: TH](#)

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