

To: All Secretaries to Ministries
Chief Secretaries to Provincial Councils
Heads of Department and Govt. Agents.

Expediting of the Award of Pensions

Background

1. It has been found that the main delay in a retired public servant obtaining his pension lies in the delay in the forwarding of the relevant documents correctly prepared to the Department of Pensions in time. The Personal Files of an officer very often do not show his complete service record, and officers, after retirement, are asked to go to their former places of work, and collect the missing details. This involves expenditure that they cannot afford (as they are no longer being paid their salaries), and results in unconscionable suffering to the retiring officers. Fundamental changes, therefore, are necessary in the award and payment of pensions if this burden on retired officers is to be avoided in the future.
2. The changes envisaged in the present circular embody the following features.
 - 2.11 The pensions will be awarded in two stages.
 - 2.111 A temporary pension of 70% of the full pension will be paid within one month from the date of retirement of an officer so that there will be no break in his income.
 - 2.112 A full pension will be paid not more than three months after retirement.
 - 2.12 The award of pensions, unlike now, where all pensions are awarded in Colombo, will be done by Government Agents at the Kachcheries.

You are kindly requested to note that the system envisaged in para 2.12 will not come into operation immediately. The change will be phased out over the next six months, as it is necessary to strengthen the Pensions Branches of the various Kachcheries. However, the balance provisions of the circular should be implemented with immediate effect.

Measures to expedite the award of Pensions

3. A separate Pensions Unit will be set up in all Ministries and Departments, to function under an officer of not less than Deputy's rank. In the case of Departments whose subjects are developed, such Units will be set up in Provincial Council Ministries. Once these units are formed, the Heads of Departments should intimate to the Director of Pensions the name, address and telephone number of the officer in

4.11 A Service Record Book (Gen. 277 Revised) will be maintained in respect of each Public Officer, which will contain, for the period of his service in any Department, details such as the date of his transfer to and from any Department, no pay leave taken, punishments, surcharge etc. This Book will be the final document on which the pension will be eventually worked out, and will be in the custody of the officer concerned.

4.12 In the case of officers already in service, the entries in the Service Record Book should commence within one month of the Book reaching the office or sub office, which should give the Book to the officer concerned. In the case of officers who will join the public service subsequently, entries should commence from their date of appointment.

5. Confirmed officers in permanent and Pensionable posts reaching the age of 54 should submit to the Head of the Institution (see para 07 below) in which the officer is serving the information required in Annex I, in the form of an Affidavit. The Head of the institution must send a copy of this immediately to the Head of the Department.
6. The Head of the Institution must send to the Director of Pensions, at least two months before the date of retirement of the officer, the details in Annex I, certifying with his seal the correctness of the information contained therein.
7. For the purpose of paragraphs 05 and 06, the term Head of the Institution means the officers specified in Column II of the list specified in Annex II of this circular. The term Head of the Department, or the Head of the sub office of the Ministry or Department which maintains the retiring officers personal file.
8. The Director of Pensions, on receipt of the information at para 06, will make arrangements to pay 70% of the pension due to that officer. No commuted gratuity should be paid until the final quantum of the pension is decided on, which, as shown below, will not be more than three months from the officer's date of retirement. The pension should be paid within one month from the date of retirement of the officer so that there will be no break in his income.
9. If the officer concerned is NOT a stores officer, the Head of the Department, on receipt of the certified copy of the information contained in Annexe I (see para 5 above) will forward the required pension documents, correctly filled, and personally checked by the Deputy in charge of the Pensions Unit, to the Director of Pensions, by the date on which the officer is due to retire.

- 9.11 In preparing these documents, the Heads of the Departments are strictly enjoined to instruct the Pensions Units of their Departments that it should go only by the details of the Service Record Book and the Personal File as available at the time of the Officer's retirement, and on no other. No officer, under any circumstances must be asked to go to his former places of work to get any kind of information whatsoever.
- 9.12 Once these documents are received the Director of Pensions will within three weeks of the date of retirement, convert the reduced pension into a full pension and release the commuted gratuity.
10. The procedure that should be carried out in the case of stores officers should be as follows:
- 10.11 The Head of the Department should do an audit of the stores the retiring officer was in charge of, within three months of the officer retiring. Stores Officers not only means Store Keepers, but also all officers who were in charge of raw materials, finished goods etc. e.g. an officer in charge of a weaving center, a Record Keeper etc.
- 10.12. If the officer concerned obstructs the Audit by deliberately absenting himself or by not providing the information, the audit should be conducted exparte and the fact mentioned in the report sent to the Director of Pensions.
- 10.13 If no shortage is detected, the Head of the Department will report the situation to the Director of Pensions, who will release the commuted gratuity and convert the reduced pension into a full pension within three weeks of this intimation.
- 10.14. If a shortage has been detected, and it has been determined that the officer concerned has been fully or partly responsible, the Head of the Department shall report to the Director of Pensions the quantum of loss for which the officer is held responsible for.
- 10.15 The Director of Pensions will thereafter determine the reduction of the pension and/or the commuted gratuity which will enable the Government to recover the loss, and will pay the net balance of the remaining pension and/or the commuted gratuity within three weeks of the intimation from the Head of the Department.

11. The procedure that should be followed in regard to officers retired under sections 12 and 15 of the Pensions Minute has been already laid down in Public Administration Circulars 239 and 360. These instructions are hereby cancelled, and the procedure in Annex III of this circular should be followed in future.
12. All outstanding cases of unpaid pension of retired officer will be disposed of within three months of the date of this Circular, in accordance with the principles outlined above.
13. The following procedure should be followed in regard to pensions under the Widows and Orphans Pension Scheme.
 - 13.11 In the case of officers dying in service, the Head of the Department in which the officer was serving at the time of his death should furnish the information called for in Annex IV to the Director of Pensions within two weeks of the intimation of death.
 - 13.12 The widow, or the guardian of the orphans of the deceased officer, as the case may be, should also be requested by the Head of the Department where the deceased officer was working at the time of his death to furnish direct to the officer in charge of the Widows and Orphans Pension Scheme the marriage certificate, the death certificate, and in the case of orphans, their certificates of birth.
 - 13.13 On receipt of the intimation of the death of an officer who is already a pensioner, the Officer in Charge of the Widows and Orphans Pensions Scheme will issue immediately the required declaration form to be completed by the widow or guardian of the orphans of the deceased pensioner. Once these are received, the Officer in Charge of the Widows and Orphans Pensions Scheme will, within three weeks from the date of the receipt of the required information, make arrangements to pay the pension to the beneficiaries.
14. A Complaints Unit will be set up in the Ministry of Public Administration, Provincial Councils and Home Affairs, and a Flying Squad in the Department of Pensions, to deal with complaints of delays in pension payments and payments under the Widows and Orphans Pensions Scheme. There will be wide publicity given to the above scheme, and if there are complaints of delay, it will be investigated and if the complaint is justified, disciplinary action will be taken against the officer concerned. The issue in the initiation of disciplinary action will be as to whether there had been or had not been a delay in observance of the time schedules specified in this circular, and no excuses whatsoever will be entertained for any delays.

15. The Department of Pensions will send the dates from which the award of pensions will be made by the Government Agents. All communications thereafter on the award of pensions should be addressed to the Government Agent of the District where the retiring officer is residing.

16. Heads of Departments and all officers dealing with pensions are kindly requested to treat the question of the rapid disposal of pensions with humanity and sympathy. The persons with which this circular concerns itself are our own colleagues, who, in the large majority of cases, have served in the Public Service honourably and faithfully. We should make every effort to ensure that their last years on this earth are made free from want and financial burden. I do hope, therefore, that you will give me your utmost cooperation in implementing these proposals, and that the actions envisaged in para 14 will not be necessary.

Sgd. Dr. P.A.T Gunasinghe,
Secretary
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Home Affairs.