

## PRESS RELEASE

### WAFAQI MOHTASIB TAKES NOTICE OF DEATH OF PENSIONER-DIRECTS FINALIZATION OF PENSION CASES SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO RETIREMENT DATE.

The Wafaqi Mohtasib, Mr. M. Salman Faruqi, taking cognizance of media reports regarding sudden death of a retired employee of Pakistan Railways seeking approval of his pension case, has directed the Pakistan Railways to ensure finalization of pension cases of their employees at least six months before the date of their retirement. Similarly, the other federal government departments have also been asked to follow this practice.

The Hon'ble Wafaqi Mohtasib took cognizance of the matter reported in the press and constituted a six-member high-level committee to look into the causes of inordinate delay occurring in finalization of the pension case and suggest remedial measure to prevent such incidents in the future.

The committee undertook a detailed examination and analysis of the system in vogue for payment of pension benefits and the statements given by the officials of Pakistan Railways and son of the late pensioner of Pakistan Railways. It was observed that despite existence of detailed rules and government instructions, often there are instances of delays in finalizing the pension papers on one pretext or the other causing hardship to pensioners especially those at the lower level.

The committee concluded that such incidents are symptomatic of a larger problem namely, lack of supervisory checks, weakness in internal controls and absence of a viable monitoring mechanism in the organizations. In order to bring improvement in the system, the Wafaqi Mohtasib recommended a number of remedial measures to streamline the existing system of pension disbursement. Some of the major recommendations include:

- I. The service records at all levels are computerized by 31st December 2014.
- II. An exclusive cell be created in each organization to maintain a list of officers and staff due to retire within a financial year and the progress of those cases be reviewed on quarterly basis.
- III. Preparation of pension papers in each case to start one year before the date of retirement irrespective of application from the government servant concerned.
- IV. Switchover from manual to system based pension payment, including the use of direct credit system (DCS) so that pension is directly sent to pensioner's bank account and withdrawal to be made through ATM. At a later stage by the end of financial year 2014-15, arrange use of biometrics with the banks to facilitate the pensioners and eliminate any ghost pensioners.
- V. Organizations to appoint a focal person not below BS-20 with support staff to exclusively oversee timely finalization of pension cases. Within Wafaqi Mohtasib as well, an Advisor would be appointed as the focal person to monitor progress in implementation of these recommendations.
- VI. The cheques, once issued for payment of settlement dues must be honoured by the banks and the organisations to ensure that there is no excuse for any budgetary constraint what so ever.
- VII. The Pakistan Railways to adopt a de-centralized system for processing pension cases.

The Federal Minister for Railways, Khajwa Saad Rafique also took serious note of the sad incident which ended in death of a former railway employee in pursuing his pensionary benefits continuously for five months after retirement. The Minister for Railways appreciated that the Honourable Wafaqi Mohtasib had taken cognizance of this case and hoped the Mohtasib office will suggest measures for institutional reforms in Pakistan Railways with a view to effecting improvements in their system and procedures for efficient and timely handling of the pension cases in future.

It may be pertinent to note that the General Manager, Pakistan Railways was also associated with the proceedings of the committee.

It is expected that these recommendations will provide a road map for all the government departments and agencies in order to remove bottle necks from the system hampering timely finalization of pension cases so as to prevent such unfortunate incidents in the future.