

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
PANCHAYAT RAJ AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Circular Memo No.2391982/RD.I/A1/2024,

Date:02-04-2024

Sub:-Pensions-Procedure for Disbursal of Pensions-Instructions of the ECI, New Delhi inter-alia barring Volunteers from distribution of pensions to the eligible beneficiaries & placing certain restrictions on the Volunteers during the course of elections to APLA/HoP, 2024- Revised procedure for the Disbursal of Pensions- Guidelines-Issued

- Ref:-
1. Memo No.1148399/RD.I/A1/2022, of PR&RD(RD.I) Department, dated 09-09-2022
 2. Letter No.437/AP/SOU3/2024, dated 30-03-2024 of ECI, New Delhi.
 3. Circular No SERP-17021/14/2024-PROJ MANG-ADMIN-SERP, dated 27-03-2024 & 31-03-2024
 4. Video Conference held on 01-04-2024 by the C.S. with all Collectors

The attention of the Chief Executive Officer, SERP & all the District Collectors, Project Directors of DRDA, MPDOs & Municipal Commissioners in the State is invited to the references read above.

2. They are informed that in the reference 2nd read above, the Election Commission of India (ECI), New Delhi has communicated the following order.

The Complaints dated 23-02-2024 and 25-02-2024 filed by the Citizens for Democracy and subsequent orders dated 13-03-2024 of the Hon'ble High Court of Andhra Pradesh in the WP 6419/2024 titled Citizens for Democracy vs ECI. Having regard to continuous flow of complaints against volunteers, newspaper reports against volunteers influencing elections at grassroots level and in the spirit of the aforesaid order of Hon'ble High Court of AP in WP 6419/2024, the Commission directs that:

(i) Volunteers shall be barred from distribution of cash benefits under any scheme (including pensions) to eligible beneficiaries.

(ii) Handheld devices (mobile/tablets/any other) provided to the volunteers be deposited with the DEOs till MCC period.

(iii) The Govt of Andhra Pradesh may be asked to make alternative arrangements for the distribution of benefits of ongoing schemes to already selected beneficiaries using DBT (electronic transfer) preferably or through other regular government employees.

3. Duly keeping the above direction in view, instructions were issued vide the Circular No. SERP-17021/14/2024-PROJ MANG-ADMIN-SERP, dated 31-03-2024, to disburse the pensions through all Village/Ward Secretariat Staff during the course of the elections.

4. In order to ensure that the orders of the ECI, New Delhi are complied without any deviation & at the same time to ensure that the disbursement of pensions is not hampered by the non-availability of 2,66,158 number of Village / Ward volunteers who earlier facilitated the door to door distribution of the pensions to the beneficiaries, the Chief Secretary to the Government has held a Video Conference with all District Collectors to obtain feedback on the instructions issued regarding the distribution of pensions issued in the Circular dated 31-3-2024.

5. In the Video Conference, the various options for the disbursement of the Pensions viz. DBT(Aadhar enabled Payment System), Door to Door distribution, & Distribution at the Village/Ward Secretariat were inter-alia discussed in detail.

6. The manifold difficulties in implementing the door-to-door distribution of pensions in view of sudden removal of volunteers from the process of pensions distribution; the lesser number of Village/Ward Secretariat staff as compared to the Volunteers; the very high number pensioners in certain Ward secretariats; non-availability of adequate number of functionaries in 3312 Secretariats (less than 8 staff members); pre-occupation of Village/Ward Secretariat staff with election related work as BLOs; distance between the Village/Ward Secretariat and the habitations in which pensioners are residing; the heat wave/high temperatures prevailing in the districts; door-to-door distribution by the Village/Ward Secretariat Staff though feasible requiring higher number of days; the need for compulsory delivery of pensions at the doorsteps to certain category of pensioners; difficulties in implementing DBT(Aadhar enabled Payment System) for disbursal of pensions; need for clear instructions regarding the procedure for disbursement of pensions, etc. were discussed in detail in the Video-Conference.

7. The Government, after careful consideration of the feed-back & the recommendations made by the District Collectors in the Video Conference, has arrived at the following conclusions.

(a) Non-feasibility for utilizing the DBT(Aadhar enabled Payment System) framework in the disbursal of the Pensions: The disbursement of Pensions through the AePS(Aadhar enabled Payment System) is examined & found not feasible for implementation, in view of the reasons, as enunciated hereunder.

(i) multiple challenges relating to the pensioners not having bank accounts; inactive bank accounts; absence of Aadhar seeding of the bank accounts; possibility of payment being made to the deceased pensioners in the absence of door-to-door visits by the volunteers; & lack of time for the rectification of the aforementioned issues.

(ii) the beneficiaries of the pension scheme belong to poorer sections of society; the elderly; the differently abled; those suffering from serious ailments, & it is impractical to make such persons travel for drawl of the pension amount to the bank branches, many of which-especially in the tribal areas- are located at quite some distance from the villages.

(b) Non-feasibility of Door to Door Distribution of the Pensions: The Door to Door Distribution of Pensions through the Village/Ward functionaries is examined & found not feasible for implementation, in view of the reasons, as enunciated hereunder.

(i) The number of Village/Ward functionaries is 127177 as against 266158 Volunteers.

(ii) Of the above Village/Ward functionaries, 12770 are ANMs / Ward Health Secretaries- who are tasked with health care services, 14232 are

Agriculture/Horticulture/Sericulture/Veterinary/Fisheries Assistants-who are engaged in providing agri-advisory services, 6754 are Energy Assistants / Ward energy secretaries-who have to respond to emergency calls relating to the tripping of power lines & their rectification. The services of these functionaries are not available for disbursement of pensions.

(iii) Many Village/Ward functionaries are discharging the duty of BLOs, the duty of Other Polling Officers and attending training duty for elections, and other election related duties and are thus not available for disbursement of pensions during the month of April and especially in the month of May.

(iv) If the above Village/Ward functionaries are eliminated, then the net staff available for the door-to-door disbursement of pensions is substantially reduced.

(v) The above staff, even if deployed, are not conversant with the exact location of the residences of the pensioners, unlike the volunteers, & therefore the disbursement of pensions is likely to take considerable time.

(vi) Delay in the disbursement of the pensions is not acceptable to the Government, as the beneficiaries belong to the most vulnerable sections of society, & for many of whom, the pension amount constitutes the only form of sustenance, and delay in disbursement will cause undue hardship.

(c) Necessity for ensuring the Door to Door Distribution of Pensions for certain category of Pensioners: Notwithstanding all the challenges, the Door to Door Distribution of the Pensions to the beneficiaries who belong to the differently abled category; those drawing pensions under the category of serious ailments; those who are infirm, bed ridden and confined to wheelchairs; & the elderly widows of war veterans drawing sainik welfare pensions, needs to be compulsorily made at their doorstep without any exception, in view of humanitarian issues involved.

(d) Distribution of the Pensions at Village and Ward Secretariats: The Distribution of Pensions at Village/Ward Secretariats is examined & found to be the feasible option for implementation, subject to the proviso at Para 7(c) above, in view of the reasons, as enunciated hereunder.

(i) The location of the Village and Ward Secretariats is familiar to all the pensioners.

(ii) The pensioners can visit the Village and Ward Secretariats at their convenience.

(iii) The services of the available functionaries of Village /Ward Secretariats can be utilised for facilitating the disbursement of pensions.

(iv) The IT hardware and connectivity is available at all Village and Ward Secretariats.

(v) The work hours of the Village/Ward Secretariats can be extended for expediting the disbursement of pensions.

(vi) The adoption of this procedure can be communicated to the pensioners with the least amount of confusion.

(vii) The needs of the categories of pensioners, who are most affected by the removal of the volunteers, is addressed by Para 7(c).

(viii) The progress of the disbursement can be easily monitored, and bottlenecks, if any, can be immediately resolved.

(ix) Further, the needs of pensioners residing at habitations far away from the village secretariats needs to be addressed.

8. Keeping in view of the above and in supersession of the instructions issued in the Circular of the CEO, SERP dated 31-3-2024, the Government issue the following orders, regarding the revised procedure for the disbursement of Pensions in the months April, May and June 2024.

(a) In compliance with the orders issued in the reference 2nd read above of the Election Commission of India, New Delhi the practice of disbursement of Pensions through Volunteers is hereby ordered to be discontinued.

(b) ***Mandatory Distribution at Doorstep of the Pensioners:*** The Door-to-Door Distribution of the Pension to the beneficiaries who belong to the differently abled category; those drawing pensions under the category of serious ailments; those who are infirm, bed ridden and confined to wheelchairs; & the elderly widows of war veterans drawing sainik welfare pensions, shall be compulsorily made at their doorstep without any exception, in view of humanitarian issues involved.

(c) ***Distribution of the Pensions at Village and Ward Secretariats:*** Subject to complying with the above, for the remaining pensioners, the disbursement shall be made at the Village/Ward Secretariat Office and the following measures shall be adopted to facilitate the pensioners.

(i) The District Collectors shall locally decide regarding the pensioners belonging to the category of "habitations far away from the village secretariats." This exercise shall be taken up carefully by the Collectors of the districts, especially in the districts such as ASR & Parvathipuram Manyam, having large number of tribal habitations, lesser secretariats vis-à-vis habitations and longer distances involved. In respect of the such habitations the District Collectors shall identify the Government Offices other than the Village/Ward Secretariats, which are at a location convenient to the pensioners and make arrangements for the deployment of staff and for the distribution of the pensions.

(ii) The working hours of Village & Ward Secretariats shall be from 9.00 am to 7.00 pm, every day, till the pensions are fully disbursed.

(iii) Adequate staff and equipment will be deployed at the Village & Ward Secretariats.

(iv) The Gram Panchayats concerned shall be responsible for making the necessary arrangements for adequate shade, seating and drinking water for the pensioners and for ensuring that no inconvenience is caused to the pensioners.

(v) The Gram Panchayats shall be authorized to book the expenditure for the above purpose from their General Funds & the Commissioner, PR & RD shall issue the necessary instructions immediately in this regard.

(vi) Proper publicity is provided for this purpose.

(vii) The District Collectors are directed to ensure that wide publicity is provided for the above measures, that the pensions are distributed on war-footing basis, and no undue hardship is caused to the pensioners.

(d) The MPDOs/Municipal Commissioners will issue Authorization letter, generated by the system, to the Panchayat Secretary & Welfare & Education Assistant in the Rural areas and Ward Administrative Secretaries and Ward Welfare Development Secretaries in the Urban areas for carrying cash from banks to their Secretariats.

(e) The Panchayat Secretary and Welfare & Education Assistant in rural areas and Ward Administrative Secretaries and Ward Welfare Development Secretaries in the Urban areas will withdraw the cash from bank & handover to the Village/Ward Secretariat staff who are involved in the pension distribution.

(f) The Finance Department has made arrangements for drawl of the requisite amount in all

the banks concerned on 3-4-2024 forenoon. Disbursal of the pensions shall be started immediately thereafter and be completed by 06-04-2024 positively.

(g) The Secretariat functionaries involved in pension disbursement either at habitation level or door to door disbursement shall also carry the Authorization letters with details of the Secretariat functionary & the amounts decided by the MPDO/MC. Sample authorization letter template enclosed.

(h) The copy of the Authorization letters should also be sent to the concerned Returning Officers.

(i) The WEA/WWDS are directed to collect the cash from all Secretariat staff on closing of disbursement every day. The cash balance with WEA/WWDS should be informed to MPDOs/MC every day.

(j) Logins will be provided to all Village/Ward Secretariat staff & they shall download the pension disbursement app in their mobile. The entire Secretariat pension list will be enabled to all the secretariat staff. The Digital Assistants shall provide the Finger Print Scanner devices to secretariat staff.

(k) User manual will be provided for proper disbursement. The WEA/WWDS are directed to explain the disbursement process to all the Village/Ward Secretariat staff.

(l) The Secretariat staff will disburse the pension amount duly obtaining Aadhaar Authentication (Biometric/Iris/ Aadhaar Face).

(m) In case of failure of Aadhaar Authentication, Real time Beneficiary Identification System (RBIS) mode pension will be disbursed by WEA/WWDS.

(n) In respect of offline secretariats, Devices used for disbursement of pensions should be mapped in MPDO/MC login. All the Village/Ward Secretariat staffs are directed to download the data and disburse pensions duly obtaining the authentication and synchronize their devices with server on daily basis.

(o) No publicity shall be given during the disbursement of pensions. Pension disbursement photos/videos shall be avoided.

(p) The Model Code of Conduct shall be adhered while making the disbursement of pensions and any deviation will be viewed seriously.

9. The CEO, SERP is requested to take necessary action accordingly.

10. The Project Director, DRDAs shall communicate this Circular to all the MPDOs/Municipal Commissioners and disburse the pensions duly following the Model Code of Conduct.

11. The MPDOs/Municipal Commissioners are requested to follow the above guidelines.

SHASHI BHUSHAN KUMAR
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVT., (FAC)

To
The Chief Executive Officer, SERP
Director, GVWV & VSWS Department, Vijayawada.

All the District Collectors in the State
All the Project Director, DRDAs in the state
All the MPDOs & Municipal Commissioners in the state.
All the Panchayat Secretaries, Welfare & Education Assistants in the State
All the Ward Administrative Secretary & Ward Welfare Development Secretaries in the State.

Copy to:

Chief Electoral Officer, Andhra Pradesh
Special Chief Secretary to Govt., MA&UD
Special Chief Secretary to Govt., GVWV & VSWS Department
Special Chief Secretary to Govt., Finance Department
PS to Chief secretary to the Government
PS to Principal Secretary, PR & RD Department.

//FORWARDED::BY ORDER//


SECTION OFFICER
