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Air HQ/99797/2/ (CPDS)/RP/O/DAV

25 Feb 22

HQ WAC IAF
HQ EAC IAF
HQ CAC IAF
HQ SWAC IAF } (AOsC-in-C)
HQ SAC IAF
HQ TC IAF
HQ MC IAF
HQ ANC (AFCC)

SYSTEM FOR PENSION ADMINISTRATION (RAKSHA) **PROJECT SPARSH**

1. **Background.** As a part of "Digital India" programme launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Service HQs were to enhance the digitization efforts to become a "Digital Armed Force". Hence, a comprehensive web based sanctioning and disbursement system namely Centralized Pension Disbursement System (CPDS) (earlier called as **CPP**: Comprehensive Pension Package) has been developed by CGDA for all three services. The main aim is to ensure correct payment of pension to defence pensioners and reduce the grievances arising due to multifarious disbursing agencies involved in payment of Defence Pension. In the concept paper on CPDS, it is also highlighted that the implementation of CPDS would accrue a savings of Rs.180 crore per annum (approx) to the Govt.

2. The provisions of previous system vis-à-vis present system (SPARSH) is attached as Appendix 'A'.

Progress of SPARSH

3. The following issues were discussed with CDS in Aug 2020 on the implementation of SPARSH:-

(a) Cyber Security concerns of SPARSH application.

(b) Issuance of revised Corr e-PPOs of left over legacy pensioner by CGDA.

- (c) Migration of legacy pensioners to SPARSH in a time bound manner.
- (d) Dedicated CGDA WAN connectivity to all Record Offices.
- (e) Structure of Grievance Redressal Mechanism.
- (f) Issue of comprehensive SOP on role, responsibilities, list of documents for manual audit by PAOs and timelines for the assigned tasks by RO, PAOs, Pensioners, PCDA (P) and service centres.
- (g) Pilot Roll Out plan.

SPARSH Roll Out

4. Roll out of SPARSH was agreed to in the manner as proposed by CGDA on 14 Jan 21. The Defence Secretary announced the pilot Roll out of SPARSH on 15 Feb 21. A meeting chaired by Def Secy was held on 10 Feb 21 to review the progress of the project SPARSH.

5. Work towards implementation of the project commenced and towards this various critical requirements needed were met on priority by the Dte of Air Veterans (DAV). Immediately after decision on rollout of SPARSH, meetings and coordination at various levels between DAV and CGDA team took place. Issuance of PPO under the earlier system (Legacy) was completely stopped. All problems faced in the implementation of SPARSH were communicated at appropriate level to CGDA team on a real time basis and most of them were resolved. Major problems faced during initial stages of implementation of CPDS (SPARSH) were: -

- (a) Poor and irregular connectivity of CGDA WAN.
- (b) Delay in verification of the bank details of the retirees.
- (c) Capture of pay spell by AFCAO.
- (d) Rejection of XML data by SPARSH
- (e) Availability of only two terminals
- (f) Difficulty in initiation of cases due to lack of validation of many fields in SPARSH.

6. The unresolved issues faced by DAV has been highlighted at various levels. The unresolved issues are:-

- (a) Lack of high speed connectivity (WAN).
- (b) No provision of report generation.
- (c) Grievances redressal mechanism to resolve queries of pensioners.
- (d) Resolution of service request in a holistic manner within a reasonable time frame.
- (e) Provision of Life Time Arrears (LTA) not incorporated in SPARSH wrt airmen/ NCs (E).
- (f) SPARSH Service Centres (Banks: SBI - 447, PNB- 375 total - 822) not yet functional effectively.

7. With effect from 15 Feb 21, all prospective pensionary cases in IAF are on SPARSH and as on 31 Jan 22, 402 pension cases in respect of commissioned officers and 4736 pension cases in respect of airmen & NCs(E) have been processed on SPARSH.

Migration of Legacy Pensioners to SPARSH

8. O/o PCDA (P) Prayagraj vide circular No 655 dated 30 Dec 21 has informed the following:-

- (a) All legacy pensioners Post 2016 are to be migrated to SPARSH.
- (b) Approx 3, 00,000 cases have already been migrated to SPARSH and remaining 3, 00,000 cases will be migrated by 31Jan 22.
- (c) Issuance of corr PPOs will be held up till completion of such data migration.
- (d) Status of migrated cases will be shared with respective record offices.

9. Representations have been received from veterans through various forums on the following aspects:-

- (a) Status of migration of pensioners data in SPARSH.
- (b) Steps to log-in into SPARSH.

- (c) Do's and Dont's for veterans after login.
 - (d) Necessary submission of any document after login (i.e. First/ Annual Identification (Digital Life Certificate/Manual Life Certificate).
 - (d) Timelines for migration.
 - (f) Correction of data while migration.
10. Subsequent to the meetings with AS (DMA) and Secy DESW on various issues of pension and cases of legacy were highlighted. The Secy assured that the cases will be looked into and a meeting with CGDA will be conducted to resolve all the issues raised by Service HQ. The matter was also reaffirmed by AG (Army) and R Adm (Pay and Pension). AS (DMA) also emphasised on formation of the core group of three services to interact with PCDA (P) Allahabad and CGDA for ensuring smooth implementation. The following core issues along with suggestive measure were projected:-

SI No	Concern / Issue	Suggestive Methodology
(a)	Migration of Data	
	(i) Details not shared with SHQs.	Put on website by CGDA
	(ii) Not available for public viewing	Share with SHQs and banks
	(iii) Not shared with banks	Intimate the pensioner.
(b)	Grievance Cell	
	(i) Redressal mechanism not robust and exhaustive.	Website with e-mail
	(ii) Accessibility to all pensioners and NoK not ensured.	Time bound resolution of grievances by CGDA
	(iii) Helplines not answered	Solution through bank and service Center who need to be empowered. Mechanism to reach each pensioner especially those in remote areas and with limited accessibility to internet or smart phones.
(c)	Pending cases and purification of data	
	(i) All pending cases of data certification/purification have been returned by CGDA.	Must be completed by CGDA transfer onto SPARSH after data Verification.
(d)	(i) Migration of Pre-2016 pensioners to SPARSH	Structured plan to migrate which should be announced publicly and shared with Service HQs

11. A letter to the Def Secy from AOA has been sent on the following aspects:-

- (a) **Timeframe**. A realistic timeframe if drawn by the office of CGDA for migration of legacy pensions will ensure high satisfaction level amongst the pensioners.
- (b) **Data Authentication**. Ensuring data authentication for its correctness prior to bringing him on-board the new system for disbursement will ensure payment of correct pension to the pensioners/NOK.
- (c) **Grievance Redressal**. A robust, user friendly and grievance redressal system for the veterans to put across their concerns and issues will ensure smooth and robust implementation of the new system.
- (d) **Service Centres**. Time bound action to make the Service Centres functional will not only ensure resolving the concerns of the pensioners but also ensure smooth and early implementation of the new system.
- (e) **Payment of Pensions**. Continuous payment of pensions with no stoppages, during phases of data authentication and transition process of disbursement from banks to PCDA (Pensions) will ensure no hardships are faced by the pensioners and will also avoid dissatisfaction.
- (f) Keeping the Service HQs on board, by the office of CGDA, on the methodology and the process being followed for migration of the legacy pensioners will ensure redressal of concerns of pensioners.

12. DAV is in close contact with the local Air Force Association (AFA) chapters in each State. The Veterans may be requested to address their queries to DAV office at Subroto Park.

13. For information, please.


 (K Anantharaman)
 Air Mshl
 AOA

Annexure: As stated

Copy to:-

AA to CAS - For info, please.

Appendix 'A'

(Refer Para 2 of Air HQ/99797/2/
(CPDS)/RP/O/DAV dt²⁵ Feb 22)

