

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF PAKISTAN
(Appellate Jurisdiction)

Present:

MR. JUSTICE MIAN SAQIB NISAR, HCJ
MR. JUSTICE UMAR ATA BANDIAL
MR. JUSTICE IJAZ UL AHSAN

CIVIL APPEAL NOS. 1631 TO 2112 OF 2017,
CIVIL APPEAL NOS. 216 OF 2016 AND CIVIL APEPAL NOS.
806 TO 811 OF 2016.

(On appeal from the judgments dated 18.7.2017,11.1.2016,05.10.2015 of the Federal Service Tribunal, Islamabad passed in Appeal Nos565 to 573,757 to 793,894-918,918-A,919-943,998-1005,1005-A,1006-1045,1108-1179,1224-1243,1265-1325,2327-2350,2352-2368,2368-A,2369,2370,2372-2443,2446-2449,2453,2451,2452,2450,2454-2484,2487-2501,2508-2520@CS/2016,867-872(R)CS/13,224(R)CS/15 etc.)

Federation of Pakistan through Secretary Capital Administration
and Development Division,
Islamabad etc.

.... Appellant(s)
(in all cases)

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Muhammad Attique ur Rehman
etc.

(in C.A.811/2016)

...Respondents(s)

For the Appellant(s)
(in all cases)

Mr. Sajid Ilyas Bhatti, DAG
Syed Rifaqat Hussain Shah, AOR
Ms. Saadia Kanwal, S.O Fin.
Mr. Abid Hussain Channa, S.O Fin.
Mr. Sajid Javed, Asstt. Legal Fin.
Mr. Abdul Razzaq, AAO MEG
Rawalpindi

For the Respondent(s) In-person

For the Respondent(s)
(in C.A.216/16)

Mr. Muhammad Ilyas Lodhi, ASC
Malik Itaat Hussain Awan, ASC

Amicus Curiae:

Mr. Muhammad Makhdoom Ali
Khan, Sr. ASC
Mr. Sikandar Bashir Mohmand, ASC

Date of Hearing

17.01.2018.

JUDGMENT

UMAR ATA BANDIAL, J.— By leave of this Court granted on 23.02.2016, 01.4.2016 and 12.12.2017 in the several connected appeals before us, the appellant Federal Government challenges the judgments delivered on common questions of fact and law by the learned Federal Service Tribunal on 05.10.2015, 11.01.2016 and 18.07.2017. The judgments impugned in the connected appeals declare the respondent employees of different institutions functioning under the Directorate General of Special Education (**“DGSE”**) to be entitled to payment of Health Allowance granted by the Federal Government vide its Office Memoranda dated 04.02.2012 and 06.2.2012. These Memoranda are issued by the Finance Division (Regulations Wing) Government of Pakistan pursuant to approval granted by the Prime Minister under the Rules of Business, 1973. It would be useful to reproduce the two

Islamabad, namely, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (**“PIMS”**), Federal Government Polyclinic (**“FGP”**) and National Institution of Rehabilitation Medicines (**“NIRM”**). The employees at these hospitals do not have a career structure in place after the Career Structure for Health Personnel Scheme Ordinance, 2011 (**“Ordinance”**) lapsed on 26.1.2011. The Health Allowance was accordingly granted by the Federal Government as a form of compensation. It is clear from the two memoranda dated 04.2.2012 and 06.2.2012 reproduced above that the Health Allowance is granted to “health personnel”. However, the composition of the category of employees that are eligible for the benefit has not been provided therein. The respondents who are several hundred in number are unrepresented by counsel. In view of the fact that a large number of employees are affected by the instant controversy, the Court has sought assistance from Mr. Muhammad Makhdoom Ali Khan, Sr. ASC and Mr. Sikandar Bashir Mohmand, ASC as amicus curiae in the matter. Mr. Sikandar Bashir Mohmand, ASC made able submissions before the Court that highlighted important facts and documents on record which simplified the controversy appreciably.

3. It transpires that an Office Memorandum dated 27.03.2012 by the Finance Division (Regulations Wing) clarifies that the term “health personnel” used in the above mentioned memoranda bears the meaning given to that expression in Section 2(b) of the Ordinance. This definition refers to the contents of Schedule-I to the Ordinance which specifies the service providers who qualify as health personnel. A perusal of Schedule-I shows that five categories of service providers are

classified as health personnel, namely: Doctors, Allied, Nurses, Paramedics and Support. The services specified under the categories of Paramedics and Support include Teachers, Audiovisual Operators, Technicians, Librarians, etc.

4. The administrative Ministry for the health institutions of the Federal Government at Islamabad is the Ministry of Capital Administration and Development Division (**"CADD"**). It is an admitted fact that vide order dated 13.03.2013 the Ministry of CADD granted the Health Allowance to the employees of the DGSE and its allied special education centers/ institutions including National Trust for the Disabled (**"NTD"**) and the National Council for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (**"NCRDP"**). The respondents were thereby acknowledged as beneficiaries of the said grant and were paid the Health Allowance with effect from 01.1.2012 until 27.10.2014, when the Finance Division informed the Accountant General Pakistan Revenue (**"AGPR"**) that only health personnel working in Federal Government hospitals and clinics were qualified to receive the Health Allowance. The AGPR correspondingly instructed the DGSE to stop payment of the said allowance to its employees as no budget allocation for the said emolument had been made in the financial year 2014-15.

5. The discontinuation of their Health Allowance was taken to the Islamabad High Court by some of the respondents. Vide order dated 17.9.2015 the learned High Court referred the dispute to the Secretary CADD for passing a speaking order thereon; and till then restrained recovery of past payments of the Health Allowance from the affected employees of DGSE and allied centers. The Secretary CADD heard the parties and by

order dated 21.3.2016 rejected the entitlement of the respondents to receive the said allowance. The principal ground of his decision is that employees of the DGSE were engaged in the process of education, training and rehabilitation of disabled children and therefore did not fall within the ambit of a health organization. The respondents successfully challenged the said order before the learned Federal Service Tribunal which has, *inter alia*, by the impugned judgment dated 18.07.2017 declared that the respondents are entitled to the grant of Health Allowance.

6. Learned Deputy Attorney General has contended that after the lapse of the Ordinance that had provided a career structure for the doctors, nurses and paramedics working in PIMS, FGP and NIRM, the Health Allowance was granted by the Federal Government as compensation to the said health personnel. He was, however, unable to show any contemporaneous direction issued by the Ministry of CADD or the Ministry of Finance that restricted the grant of the Health Allowance to the claimed employees of the three hospitals specified by him. As already noted above, the definition of health personnel provided in the Ministry of Finance Office Memorandum dated 27.3.2012 is wide in scope and therefore unhelpful to his plea.

7. We have examined the definition of “health personnel” adopted by said memorandum dated 27.3.2012 from Section 2(b) of the Ordinance which is to the following effect:

- “b) “health personnel” means a person who holds a post in any institute or organization delivering services in the health sector and included in Schedule-I, but does not include:
 - i) a person who is on deputation to the Federal Government from any Province or other authority;

ii) a person who is employed on contract, or on work charged basis or who is paid from contingencies.”

8. It is noted that the foregoing definition of health personnel covers persons holding posts in any institute or organization who are delivering services in the health sector that are included in Schedule-I to the Ordinance. Learned Deputy Attorney General was unable to distinguish the respondents, who are employees of the DGSE and allied institutions/centers, NCRDP and NTD, from the paramedic and support staff positions that qualify as health personnel according to Schedule-I to the Ordinance. It is not denied by the appellant that education, training and rehabilitation of disabled persons are services provided in the health sector. These services fall within the terms of Schedule-I to the Ordinance and therefore the providers thereof qualify as health personnel.

9. Accordingly, not only do the respondents fall within the category of persons who are, in terms of Finance Division Memoranda dated 06.2.2012 and 27.3.2012, eligible for grant of the Health Allowance but their entitlement has in fact been admitted by both the Ministry of CADD and Ministry of Finance. In this respect the aforementioned letter dated 13.3.2013 issued by the Ministry of CADD is referred. Also the affidavit of the Secretary Finance, Government of Pakistan filed in the Islamabad High Court pursuant to that Court's order dated 20.3.2015 passed in Writ Petition No. 4007 of 2014, specifically records that the proposal approved by the Prime Minister vide Summary dated 25.1.2012 did not restrict admissibility of the Health Allowance to the personnel of the three hospitals (identified by the learned DAG). For that reason the Finance

Division Memoranda dated 04.2.2012 and 6.2.2012 made the allowance available to all health personnel employed by the Federal Government in the BPS Scheme.

10. As a result, the said allowance was paid to the health personnel of the DGSE and its allied institutions until 27.10.2014 when the Finance Division instructed the AGPR to confine the grant of the allowance to employees of Federal Government hospitals and clinics. This instruction represents merely a change of opinion which is not occasioned by an amendment in the terms of eligibility for the Health Allowance. Therefore, as the Memoranda dated 04.2.2012, 06.2.2012 and 27.3.2012 issued by the Finance Division, Government of Pakistan still hold the field in their original terms, there is no merit in the objection by the learned DAG to the entitlement of the respondents to claim and receive the Health Allowance.

11. As a secondary and also tenuous argument, learned Deputy Attorney General contended that the Health Allowance is granted under executive fiat without any statutory backing therefore the same can be withdrawn by the Federal Government at any time. That is clearly a flawed contention. It is admitted that grant of the Health Allowance and the terms of eligibility to receive the same were determined by the competent authority, Ministry of Finance in accordance with Rules of Business of the Federal Government. The original terms of the said lawful grant still hold the field. These were acted upon and payment of the Health Allowance to the respondents has conferred a vested right upon them. In such circumstances, the executive is barred by the rule of *locus poenitentiae* from unilaterally rescinding and retrieving the benefit availed by its recipients. Reference is made

to **Pakistan, through the Secretary, Ministry of Finance vs. Muhammad Himayatullah Farukhi** (PLD 1969 SC 407) and **The Engineer-in-Chief Branch vs. Jalaluddin** (PLD 1992 SC 207). Therefore without a change of the terms of eligibility for the Health Allowance even the prospective exclusion of the respondents from receipt of the benefit shall constitute arbitrary and unlawful action.

12. In the circumstances, we do not find any error or defect in the impugned judgments of the learned Federal Service Tribunal dated 05.10.2015, 11.1.2016 and 18.7.2017. Consequently, these appeals are dismissed and the entitlement of employees of the DGSE, allied institutions/centers, NCRDP and NTD to receive the Health Allowance is affirmed.

Chief Justice

Judge

Judge

Islamabad
17.01.2018
Naseer

Not approved for reporting.