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सुरेश चन्द्रा  
SURESH CHANDRA  
विधि सचिव  
Law Secretary



भारत सरकार  
विधि और न्याय मंत्रालय  
विधि कार्य विभाग  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF LAW & JUSTICE  
DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS  
7<sup>th</sup> August, 2017

D.O.No.J-12012/13/2017-Judl  
Dear Secretary,

It has been brought to my notice that there have been instances of inordinate delay in settlement of counsel fee bills, resulting in avoidable grievances from the counsel on various fora, including filing of petitions before the Courts, by the counsel concerned.

2. Two such cases have been filed in the High Court of Punjab & Haryana, in which the Hon'ble High Court has taken a serious view in the matter and observed as under:

*"A larger question also arises whether in the eventuality, bills are cleared by the Government department/public sector undertakings after inordinate delay, appropriate interest/penal interest is required to be paid; whether non-payment of fee bills amounts to infringement of right to life and livelihood, whether in such cases responsibility of the concerned officials is required to be fixed and interest/penal interest is liable to be deducted from the salary of such officials."*

3. While the matter is now listed for 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017, in the meanwhile, the Hon'ble High Court has directed the Assistant Solicitor General of India, *inter alia*, to seek instructions regarding the status of pending bills and whether any policy can be framed for settling this issue once and for all.

4. This Department has in the past issued guidelines, wherein all the Ministries/Departments have been requested to ensure prompt payment of fee to the counsel (OM No.34(1)/2010-Judicial dated 8.12.2010). It is felt that if there is an inordinate delay in the settlement of counsel fee bills, Courts may come down heavily on the Government thereby inviting harsh strictures and directions.

5. I shall be grateful if you can sensitize your officers that settlement of counsel fee bills are prompt and within a reasonable time, in any case not beyond a month's time from the date of submission of bills by the counsel concerned. It is also requested that if any officer is found negligent in processing counsel fee bills, the administrative Ministry may consider taking appropriate action against him/her in accordance with the rules.

6. I shall be grateful if these instructions can be brought to the notice of all Departments/PSUs under your administrative control.  
With regards,

Yours sincerely,  
(SURESH CHANDRA)

Secretaries to all Ministries/ Departments  
Copy to All:

- I) Additional Solicitor General of India
- II) Assistant Solicitor General of India
- III) Nodal Officer, LIMBS

( R K Srivastava )  
Deputy Legal Adviser

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