

21/02/2008 50% Pay hike for Central Govt Staff - Secretary-Level Officer Could Earn Basic Salary Of Rs 80,000 A Month -TNN

New Delhi: Central government staff and officers, along with their counterparts in the defence and paramilitary forces, have reason to paint the town red on Holi. The sixth central pay commission is set to gift them a 50-52% pay hike, which includes their house rent allowance (HRA).

The report is likely to be submitted to finance minister P Chidambaram by panel chairman Justice B N Srikrishna as early as Tuesday.

On Thursday, TOI had reported that the Maharashtra government had ignored RBI's warning to implement a 20-25% hike for its employees, which would place a Rs 7,000 crore burden on the state exchequer. For central government employees, higher housing and transport allowances may be the icing on the cake, although there could be a modest hike in city compensatory allowance.

Indications are that a secretary to the government can earn a basic salary of Rs 80,000 a month (up from Rs 26,000 with 50% merged dearness pay and 47% DA on the total). The cabinet secretary, the country's seniormost officer, could have it fixed at Rs 90,000 (up from Rs 30,000 with 50% merged dearness pay and 47% DA on the total).

As per tradition, the new scales will be effective from January 1, 2006.

The across-the-board hike could be paler compared to the pay commission's fifth edition (1997), the best bounty so far, as the proposed quantum of the hike now is a few percentage points (about 0.40) lower.

HRA in A1 cities set to soar

New Delhi: The good news in the sixth pay panel recommendations is that a government employee could, sources indicated, now look forward to higher annual increments, besides the regular addition of DA, which is now an annual average of 12%. There is, however, the possibility of a fresh rationalisation of DA rates (decided on the basis of consumer price index) because of the upward scaling of salaries. The increase in the city compensatory allowance (maximum Rs 300 at present) may also not be substantial.

The bounty for senior officers could have been more attractive than what the commission is likely to propose, had the President's monthly salary not been fixed at Rs 1 lakh recently. As expected, the panel could slash the number of scales to 18 from the present 33, to facilitate accounting and uniformity across various employees and officers.

A likely implication for senior officers in A1 cities (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad) could be that government accommodation might not seem as attractive as before because their HRA may rise substantially. At the minimum entry level (Group D), a government staffer is likely to get Rs 8,000 now while the highest starting pay in non-gazetted grade (Group C) could be Rs 20,000.

The expected starting pay for gazetted Group A and Group B officers could be Rs 26,000 and Rs 22,000 respectively. Pay at the highest government (secretary) level is likely to be Rs 80,000. At present, a Group A officer gets around Rs 18,000 at entry (12% HRA in A1 cities is extra). The commission is also likely to revise the transport allowance (conveyance), a maximum of only Rs 800 in A1 cities now. Officials are also awaiting the new shape of children's educational assistance, which is Rs 40 every month

per child (Classes I to X) and Rs 50 (Classes XI and XII), although it is Rs 100 per month for special (challenged) children.

Another 'anomaly' which the panel might address is the daily allowance an official gets when on tour. The highest such allowance at present is Rs 260 per day (for ordinary lodging) and Rs 650 (for hotel lodging). It means the maximum an officer can spend every day on his hotel accommodation, food and local conveyance is Rs 650 even when, say, he is on a tour of Mumbai.