

### 18.3 PASSAGE BENEFIT SCHEME

- 18.3.1 The Passage Benefit Scheme originated in the colonial days and was meant to provide free passages for sea travel to expatriates in post in the country to travel from Mauritius to their homeland after a tour of service. Eventually, this privilege was granted to all senior officers and thereafter to all Government officers employed on permanent and pensionable terms.
- 18.3.2 Since its introduction in the Public Sector, the Scheme has undergone fundamental changes in the successive salary reviews to allow more beneficiaries to make use of passage benefit for purposes other than travelling. Currently, officers can use their accumulated passage benefit for: travel purposes for themselves and immediate members of their families; other expenses in connection with their travel; expenses incurred for spending vacation at inland hotels/recreational resorts; paying the fees in connection with School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations for their wards and for medical treatment. At the time of retirement officers are allowed to cash in *to totu* all accumulated passage benefit standing to their credit.
- 18.3.3 The EOAC Report 2013 made provision for officers to cash their passage benefit at the discount rate of 90% for any purpose other than travel subject to the balance of their passage account being not less than Rs 11000. Provision has also been made to allow officers to use their passage benefit for the payment of premium under the approved Medical Insurance Scheme.
- 18.3.4 Presently, officers on permanent and pensionable establishment drawing a minimum monthly salary of Rs 24425 or reckoning at least eight years' service earn passage benefit at the rate of 5% of the gross salaries annually.
- 18.3.5 Officers are allowed to use their accumulated passage benefit provided that the balance to their credit stands at Rs 11000 or more. If both spouses are civil servants, they are allowed to use their passage benefit provided they have jointly accumulated an aggregate of not less than Rs 22000. However, when officers make use of their accumulated passage benefit to meet the fees in connection with SC and HSC examinations for their wards, the balance standing to their credit may be less than Rs 11000.
- 18.3.6 Officers do not earn passage benefit during probationary period, vacation leave, vacation leave taken as casual leave, sick leave in excess of 21 working days in any calendar year, maternity leave, adoption leave, parental leave, study leave with or without pay, injury leave, interdiction period, accumulated sick leave taken prior to retirement, and leave without pay or leave reckoned for late arrivals.

- 18.3.7 Officers may cash part or the whole amount of their accumulated passage benefit for spending vacation at inland hotels/recreational resorts provided they produce documentary evidence to that effect and their accumulated passage benefit is not less than Rs 11000.
- 18.3.8 Officers serving in our missions abroad may cash part or the whole amount of their accumulated passage benefit for spending vacation abroad in hotels/recreational resorts provided they produce documentary evidence to that effect and their accumulated passage benefit is not less than Rs 11000.
- 18.3.9 On the demise of a beneficiary, the outstanding benefit is paid *in toto* to the heirs.
- 18.3.10 In the context of this review exercise, it has been represented that officers should also be allowed to make use of their accumulated passage benefit for other purposes as follows:
- (a) to undergo a medical treatment requiring a surgery/dialysis/medical test for themselves or immediate members of their family either locally or abroad;
  - (b) the payment of university fees for themselves and vocational training fees for their wards; and
  - (c) if both spouses are Civil Servants, they should be allowed to use their passage benefit provided one of the spouses has accumulated passage benefit of not less than Rs 10,000.
- 18.3.11 Representations have also been received to the effect that officers:-
- (i) be allowed to earn passage benefit if they elect to work during their pre-retirement leave;
  - (ii) be allowed to cash in *toto* the accumulated passage benefit standing to their credit for any other purpose and;
  - (iii) be refunded the total value (100%) of their accumulated passage benefit standing to their credit on resignation from the public service.
- 18.3.12 It has further been represented that:-
- (i) the eligibility criteria be reviewed and all officers upon appointment in a substantive capacity be allowed to earn passage benefit irrespective of salary level; and
  - (ii) the salary cut-point to earn passage benefit be brought down.
- 18.3.13 We have examined the above representations and are reviewing the cash refund for other purposes as well as the eligibility criteria for earning passage benefit. We are also reducing the floor value of the accumulated passage benefit of Rs 11000 and the salary cut-point to earn passage benefit.

**Recommendation 1****18.3.14 We recommend that:**

- (a) officers on permanent and pensionable establishment drawing a minimum monthly salary of Rs 25525 or reckoning at least five years' service should earn passage benefit at the rate of 5% of the gross salaries annually; and
- (b) officers should not earn passage benefit during probationary period, vacation leave, vacation leave taken as casual leave, sick leave in excess of 21 working days in any calendar year, maternity leave, adoption leave, parental leave, study leave with or without pay, injury leave, interdiction period, accumulated sick leave taken prior to retirement, and leave without pay.

**Recommendation 2****18.3.15 We also recommend that beneficiaries should be allowed to make use of their accumulated passage benefit:**

- (i) for travel purposes for themselves and for the immediate members of their families namely spouses and dependent children below 21 years as well as for their dependent children aged up to 30 years old who are following a full time course in a tertiary institution either locally or abroad;
- (ii) for travel purposes in favour of their mother and/or father;
- (iii) to meet the costs of other expenses in connection with their travel or cash either partly or wholly any balance of their accumulated benefit at the time of travel; and
- (iv) for medical treatment for themselves/immediate member(s) of their family either locally or abroad.

**Recommendation 3****18.3.16 We further recommend that:**

- (a) officers should be allowed to use their accumulated passage benefit provided that the balance to their credit stands at Rs 10000 or more. If both spouses are civil servants, they should be allowed to use their passage benefit provided they have jointly accumulated an aggregate of not less than Rs 20000;
- (b) officers may cash part or the whole amount of their accumulated passage benefit for spending vacation at inland hotels/recreational resorts provided they produce documentary evidence to that effect and their accumulated passage benefit is not less than Rs 10000;

- (c) officers serving in our missions abroad may cash part or the whole amount of their accumulated passage benefit for spending vacation abroad in hotels/recreational resorts provided they produce documentary evidence to that effect and their accumulated passage benefit is not less than Rs 10000;
- (d) officers should be allowed to make use of their accumulated passage benefit to meet the fees in connection with SC, HSC examinations and vocational training for their wards as well as for the payment of university fees for themselves and for their wards, either locally or abroad even if the balance standing to their credit may be less than Rs 10000;
- (e) officers should be allowed to cash their accumulated passage benefit at a discounted rate of 90% for any purpose other than travel provided the balance standing to their credit is not less than Rs 10000. The remaining 10% of the accumulated passage benefit should, however, not be forfeited but remain in the balance standing to their credit;
- (f) officers who elect to work during pre-retirement leave should be allowed to earn passage benefit;
- (g) officers who resign from the public service should be paid the total value (100%) of the accumulated passage benefit standing to their credit;
- (h) officers should be allowed to cash *in toto* all passage benefit standing to their credit at the time of retirement; and
- (i) on the demise of a beneficiary, the outstanding accumulated passage benefit should be paid *in toto* to the heirs.

#### Recommendation 4

18.3.17 We additionally recommend that the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms should, in consultation with the Accountant General and the concerned Insurance Company, consider the possibility of allowing Public Officers to make use of their accumulated passage benefit for the payment of premium under the Approved Medical Insurance Scheme.

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