

**Dr. Jitendra Singh MOS PPG&P chairs 30th meeting of Standing Committee of Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA); Assures early redressal of Problems of Pensioners & that Aadhaar is not mandatory to get pension**

The Union Minister of State, MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh chaired the 30th meeting of the Standing Committee of Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA) on 23rd March, 2018 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The SCOVA meeting is organised by the Department of Pensions & Pensioners' Welfare (DoP&PW), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions and the last such meeting was held on January 12, 2017.

During the meeting, Dr. Jitendra Singh said that the SCOVA which was first constituted in July, 1986 would be completing 32 years this year. He said this platform has gone a long way in addressing in a focused manner issues related to Pensioners. He said that today's interaction was very meaningful and stimulating, thus reflecting on the working of DoP&PW.

The Minister while assuring the representatives of pensioners' Associations said that it was no more mandatory to have one's Aadhaar Card to get his/her pension.

The Minister said that the Department of Pensions has brought out a series of OMs to benefit the Pensioners/Family Pensioners in the last 12 months including enhancing of minimum pension from Rs.3500/- to Rs.9000/- per month; the ceiling of gratuity has been increased from the existing Rs.10 lakhs to Rs.20 lakhs; the rates of ex-gratia lump sum compensation being paid to the families of employees who die in performance of duty has been increased from existing Rs. 10-15 lakhs to Rs.25-45 lakhs. He also said that divorced daughter will be eligible for family pension if divorce case has been filed before the death of pensioner/family pensioner, even though the judgment has been passed after the death of the pensioner /family pensioner.

Dr. Jitendra Singh said that this Government has given relief to the senior citizens and Pensioners in the Budget 2018-19 by allowing Standard Deduction of Rs. 40,000/- per year to the Pensioners and given exemption on tax on account of interest income from bank savings accounts has been increased to Rs. 50,000/ from Rs. 10,000/- per year. Deduction on account of health insurance premium which was earlier allowed at maximum of Rs.30,000/- has now been increased to Rs. 50,000/- in the case of Senior Citizens/Pensioners.

While addressing the meeting he said that we need to put in place an institutionalized mechanism to make good use of the knowledge, experience and efforts of the retired employees which can help in the value addition to the current scenario. Dr. Jitendra Singh said the retired employees are a healthy and productive workforce for India and we need to streamline and channelize their energies in a productive direction. We should learn from the pensioners' experience, he added. The Minister also said that the DoP&PW should be

reoriented in such a way that pensioners become a part of nation building process.

In the meeting, discussions were held on the action taken report of the 29th SCOVA meeting. Further many issues related to pensioners were discussed threadbare, such as revision of PPOs of pre-2006 pensioners, Health Insurance Scheme for pensioners including those residing in non-CGHS area, Application of Court Judgements to all similarly placed cases for Revision of Pension, Special "Higher" Family Pension for widows of the war disabled invalidated out of service, Extension of CGHS facilities to P&T pensioners, issue relating to CGHS Wellness Centres etc. The Minister directed for the prompt and time bound redressal of the grievances of the pensioners and said that we should have sympathetic attitude towards them.

Secretary, DoP&PW, Shri K.V. Eapen and other senior officers of DoP&PW and other important Ministries/Departments of Government of India. The meeting was attended by the representatives Pensioners Associations which are Members of SCOVA – (including Secretary General RSCWS & others).