

DAWN

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Ombudsman directs Urdu varsity to clear retired employees' dues

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Ombudsman has advised the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science, and Technology (FUUAST) to immediately rectify its financial mismanagement and clear the long-overdue pensions of its retired employees, who have been waiting for several years to get their right.

The Ombudsman's advice came after two retired professors Dr Auj-i-Kamal and Prof. Masood Ahmed lodged complaints over a three-year delay in payment of their pension and commutation dues.

The university has been directed to take urgent measures to prevent further delay in pensions and avoid prolonging the financial suffering of its retired employees.

More than 50 teachers and other employees of the university have been waiting for their post-retirement dues from the university and five of them have died. In its investigation, the Ombudsman expressed deep concern over the university's financial mismanagement, highlighting that despite an alarming rise in outstanding dues—now totaling over Rs304 million—the university has failed to take effective steps to resolve the matter.

The Federal Ombudsman in its decision on Oct 2, criticised the university administration for allowing the situation to deteriorate and pointed to systemic financial inefficiencies that have severely impacted its ability to fulfill obligations to retired employees.

The Ombudsman's investigation revealed that the Islamabad campus of the university currently has Rs500 million in surplus funds. Yet, due to separate financial structures and management issues, these funds have not been

used to relieve the financial distress at the Karachi campus, where most of the retired employees are waiting for their pensions. The Wafaqi Mohtasib urged the university to resolve these internal financial hurdles and redirect available resources to meet its liabilities.

The Ombudsman further called for a comprehensive review of the university's financial management practices, noting that poor planning and inability to secure adequate government grants have compounded the university's financial crisis.

The failure to secure additional funding, despite repeated requests for a bailout, was viewed as a symptom of ineffective management. The Urdu university has been facing financial challenges for several years, with stagnant grants and increasing retirements adding pressure on its budget.

The case, filed in July and August 2024, brought to light the broader issue of financial mismanagement as the university owes Rs179.8 million in dues to 57 retired employees, with 31 more retirees adding a further Rs128.9 million to the already crippling pension liabilities.

Although the Wafaqi Mohtasib officially closed the case under the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Investigation and Disposal of Complaints) Regulation, 2013, it emphasised that the university must take swift corrective actions to ensure pensioners receive their rightful dues without further delays.

The Ombudsman's ruling strongly favored the petitioners, holding the university accountable for its admin-

istrative failures and recommending the exploration of alternative solutions, including seeking an immediate bailout package from the government. The Urdu university has principal seat in Karachi with a full campus in Islamabad. Currently, thousands of students are pursuing their education in this university.

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Ombudsman directs for online e-Protector Stamp Facility

The Wafaqi Mohtasib, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi on Wednesday intervened to resolve the long-standing issue of affixing of e-protector stamp on the passports of Pakistanis intending to proceed abroad for employment or higher education.

As a result, the Bureau of Immigration has now started online e-protector facility also, which is available at the airports too.

It may be informed that it is obligatory for all those traveling to middle eastern or other countries for employment to get the protector stamps affixed on their passports otherwise they have not been granted permission to travel abroad and many had to return from the airports due to its non-availability. This resulted in not only the loss of foreign employment but also the money spent on buying the tickets.

On the directions of the Wafaqi Mohtasib online e-protector stamp facility is now available at all international airports of the country on 24/7 basis so that a protector stamp may be affixed on the passports of anyone desirous of going abroad who might have forgotten to get his passport stamped. During this year 14,339 Pakistanis have already availed themselves of this facility till date. APP