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No. CHQ/P&TAFOA/2025-26/19

Dated: 13th May 2025

To
Sr. DDG (PA & F)
Dak Bhawan
Sansad Marg, New Delhi-110001

Subject: Promotion to the Vacant Posts of AO — Request for Consideration of Reserved Category Candidates-reg.

Ref: PA Wing OM No. 4-14/2024/PACE/187-289 dated 16.08.2024

Respected Sir,

Apropos the OM captioned above— the latest promotion order from AAO to AO — wherein, despite the issuance of the order, the working strength of Sr. AO/AO remains at 446 against a sanctioned strength of 470. Furthermore, 3 Sr. AO/AOs are due to retire by May/June 2025. The unfilled 27 posts are significant, especially in light of the acute stagnation in the AAO cadre.

2. It is understood that most of these vacancies are reserved and could not be filled due to the non-availability of SC/ST candidates within the zone of consideration, even in the extended zone.

3. In this regard, DoP&T OM No. DOPT-1721625311004 dated 22.07.2024 provides detailed guidelines under Para 4.3 on the zone of consideration for promotion by selection. The extended zone for SC/ST candidates is five times the number of vacancies. Para 4.3.1 further clarifies that if sufficient SC/ST candidates are not available within the normal zone, the field must be extended accordingly, and SC/ST candidates within the extended field should be considered against reserved vacancies.

4. However, the OM is silent on whether the zone of consideration for reserved candidates should be computed from the last promoted UR candidate or from the last promoted candidate of the respective reserved category. This ambiguity hampers implementation.

5. **Moreover, Para 4.4.6(d) of the same OM mandates that if officers with the requisite benchmark are not available in the zone, a fresh DPC should be held with a further extended field of consideration.**

6. It may be noted that in the 2022 (promotion order dated 17.05.2022) DPC involving 363 vacancies, the entire AAO cadre was within the extended zone [$5 \times 363 = 1815$], and all eligible reserved candidates were promoted. However, the current vacancy size is small due to the one-time mass promotion of over 1000 AAOs in 2018, following a 25 year-gap in LDCE, making the present zone of zone of consideration too narrow for meaningful inclusion.

7. The principle of maintaining a reasonably broad zone is reinforced in Para 2 of DoP&T OM No.22011/2/2002-Estt(D) dated 06.01.2006, which emphasizes that while avoiding unnecessary paperwork, the zone must be wide enough to include officers who are on deputation, retiring, under debarment, or in sealed cover, especially considering relaxed benchmarks for SC/ST officers.

8. Further, in view of Article 335 of the Constitution of India, which provides for making provisions in favour of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by relaxing qualifying standards in matters of promotion, it is requested that the Department may consider granting appropriate relaxation in the zone of consideration for SC/ST candidates to fill up the backlog vacancies in the AO cadre.

9. In light of the above, we humbly request that the situation may be reviewed, and due promotions to eligible reserved category candidates may be ensured. **If necessary, clarification or one-time relaxation regarding the zone of consideration may kindly be sought from DoP&T, citing the cadre's unique situation, to avert grievances or legal complications.**

Hope you shall consider our request favourably.

With profound regards.

Yours sincerely,



(M. Sudhakar)
General Secretary
P&TAFOA