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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

% *Date of Decision: 26.02.2026*

+ **LPA 96/2026, CM APPL. 13061/2026, CM APPL. 13062/2026 & CM APPL. 13063/2026**

ANJALI

.....Appellant

Through: Mr. Abhijit Anand, Advocate
(through VC).

versus

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

.....Respondents

Through: Mr. Shashank Bajpai with Ms. Aashna Mehra, Mr. Vaisal Tripathi, Mr. Govind Singh Chauhan, Advocates.

CORAM:

HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE TEJAS KARIA

TEJAS KARIA, J. (Oral)

1. This *intra court* Appeal is filed against the order dated 06.01.2026 (“**Impugned Order**”) passed in W.P.(C) 94/2026 (“**Writ Petition**”) whereby the Writ Petition filed by the Appellant has been dismissed.
2. The Writ Petition was filed by the Appellant seeking direction to quash and set aside the Notification dated 31.08.2025 issued by the Respondents for the recruitment of the Officer Scale-I Post for the Regional Rural Banks (“**RRBs**”) and issue fresh notification by revisiting / fixing cut-off date of age limit as 01.06.2025 or 01.04.2025 and also fix the lower age limit as 20 / 21 years. Consequently, the Appellant has also sought direction against the Respondents to allow the Petitioner to apply for the Officer Scale-I Post for RRBs.



3. The learned Counsel for the Appellant submitted that the Respondents conduct Common Recruitment Process (“CRP”) for the recruitment of Officer Scale-I Post for RRBs every year and the cut-off date of age limit of the candidates applying for the same is 01st June of that year. However, for CRP for RRBs for the year 2025 (“CRP RRBs XIV”), the cut-off date for determining the age limit of the candidates was revised to 01.09.2025 instead of 01.06.2025. It was further submitted that no prior information / notice was circulated by the Respondent whereby around 40,000 to 50,000 candidates including the Appellant were left out from appearing in CRP RRBs XIV for the Officer Scale-I Post, which is violative of Article 14 and 16 of the Constitution of India, 1950.

4. The learned Counsel for the Appellant submitted that it is well settled law that change of rule in mid-way for selection process is not permissible and any change in cut-off date for determining the age limit of the candidates should be widely circulated and in an absence of the same, equality of opportunity would not be available to all eligible candidates. In support of this submission, the learned Counsel for the Appellant relied upon the decision of the Supreme Court as under:

- *Tej Prakash Pathak & Ors. v. Rajasthan High Court & Ors.*, (2025) 2 SCC 1
- *Sivanandan C.T. & Ors. v. High Court of Kerala & Ors.*, (2024) 3 SCC 799
- *Raj Kumar & Ors. v. Shakti Raj & Ors.*, (1997) 9 SCC 527



5. The learned Counsel for the Appellant submitted that it is well settled law that the age limit of candidates comes under the eligibility criteria and is part of qualification to be fixed by the rule-making body as held in ***Kuldip Singh & Ors. v. State of Haryana & Anr.***, (1995) SCC OnLine P&H 897.

6. The learned Counsel for the Appellant also submitted that the mode of recruitment and the category from which the recruitment to the service should be made are all matters, which are exclusively within the domain of the executive and it is the function of the rule-making authority to provide the basis for selection as held in ***State of Andhra Pradesh & Anr. v. V. Sadanandam & Ors.***, (1989) Supp (1) SCC 574.

7. The learned Counsel for the Appellant submitted that the calendar for conducting the examination for CRP RRBs XIV for the post of Officer Scale-I for RRBs was issued on 15.01.2025 by the Respondents and as per the said, the preliminary examination for the same was scheduled on 27.07.2025, 02.08.2025 and 03.08.2025 and the main examination was scheduled on 13.09.2025. However, the Respondents revised a calendar for conducting the examination for CRP RRBs XIV *vide* revised calendar dated 16.06.2025 and while issuing the Notification dated 31.08.2025, the cut-off date for determining the age limit of the candidates was revised as 01.09.2025, which was different from earlier CRP RRBs, where the cut-off date for determining the age limit of the candidates was 01.06.2025.

8. The learned Counsel for the Appellant submitted that several candidates including the Appellant had been preparing for the examination of CRP RRBs XIV thinking that cut-off date for determining the age limit would be 01.06.2025, however, the same was changed to 01.09.2025 without any



prior intimation / notice whereby the Appellant and other candidates were ousted from appearing in the CRP RRBs XIV. It was submitted on behalf of the Appellant that the Appellant approached the Central Administrative Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi (“CAT”). However, the CAT *vide* order dated 30.12.2025 refused to entertain the said Application due to lack of *jurisdiction*. Therefore, the Petitioner filed the Writ Petition.

9. Having considered the above submissions, we are of the considered opinion that there was no arbitrariness in fixing a cut-off date specific to a particular recruitment cycle in absence of any statutory requirement to have same cut-off date for every recruitment process. Since the examination was scheduled later in the year in 2025 as compared to earlier cycles of the recruitment, the cut-off date for CRP RRBs XIV was fixed as 01.09.2025 as compared to the cut-off date for CRP RRBs XIII which was 01.06.2024. Therefore, the cut-off date for CRP RRBs XIV being different from CRP RRBs XIII cannot be the ground for setting aside the same.

10. CRP RRBs is governed by the Regional Rural Banks (Appointment of Officers & Employees) Rules, 2017 (“**Rules**”), which contemplate recruitment by an approved agency and provide the framework for the selection. As per the Rules, the age limit is prescribed in IIIrd Schedule, however, no cut-off date is specified therein to determine the age limit. Accordingly, the recruiting authority was entitled to specify a cut-off date to have uniform and transparent process for determining the age for the recruitment process. Accordingly, Impugned Order has rightly relied upon the decision of the Supreme Court in *Dr. Ami Lal Bhat v. State of Rajasthan & Ors.*, (1997) 6 SCC 614, which has held that it is a discretion of the recruiting



authority to fix a cut-off date for determining the age limit and the cut-off date can be interdicted only if it is found that it was fixed in unreasonable and capricious manner. The sole ground raised by the Appellant for challenging the cut-off date is the same being different from the earlier recruitment cycle. This ground alone cannot result in an arbitrariness in fixing the cut-off date so long as the same is not contrary to the statutory mandate or the rules applicable to the said recruitment process. The cut-off date is universally applicable to all the candidates equally and there is no discrimination made to single out the Appellant from the rest of the candidates.

11. The Court while exercising the writ jurisdiction has no power to reset a foundational eligibility parameter in the middle of process. Where a recruitment process has already started, any direction to change the cut-off date in the middle of the process would result in re-opening the entire process by re-working the pool of the candidates. Therefore, the absence of any illegality, *mala fide*, arbitrariness or a breach of binding statutory rules, judicial intervention for re-casting the eligibility criteria cannot be exercised.

12. In any event, the process of recruitment cannot be altered once it has commenced. The Petitioner approached this Court much after the recruitment process had started and the preliminary test was conducted. Therefore, any change or alteration in the middle of the process at the instance of the Petitioner would result in grave prejudice to all the candidates, who have already participated in the process. The Impugned Order has rightly observed that there was no violation of statutory rules, demonstrable arbitrariness attracting violation of Article 14 of the Constitution or *mala fide* to justify judicial intervention, especially given the stage at which the Appellant had



approached this Court seeking relief to change the cut-off date so as to include the Appellant in the process.

13. The Appellant cannot be said to have legitimate expectation of a particular cut-off date based on the previous recruitment cycles when there was no statutory rule for having the same cut-off date for every recruitment cycle. Accordingly, no ground is made out for quashing the notification fixing the cut-off date as 01.09.2025 for CRP RRBs XIV. Consequently, there is no justification for interfering with the Impugned Order.

14. In view of the above analysis, we concur with the findings of the learned Single Judge in the Impugned Order. Accordingly, the present Appeal is hereby dismissed. All Pending Applications also stand disposed of.

TEJAS KARIA, J

DEVENDRA KUMAR UPADHYAYA, CJ

FEBRUARY 26, 2026/ 'A'