

## Agenda Note

**Agenda Item**:- A proposal received in the Commission from DoP&T, who in turn received the same through PMO suggesting change in the interview system of Civil Services Examination.

### **A. Proposal**

DoP&T vide their OM dated 23.10.2007 has forwarded a proposal received through PMO suggesting change in the interview system of Civil Services Examination and requested the views of the NCST

It was suggested in the representation that recruitment process especially the interview system need to be suitably modified to promote the feeling of brotherhood and equality for strengthening national unity and integrity.

At present all the examinations are conducted by giving Roll Numbers to candidates. SC/ST and OBC candidates are given identifiable roll nos. The interview boards at present have details like name of candidates, father's name, caste, religion etc. The SC/ST/OBC are interviewed separately, normally in the afternoon session. This may lead to discrimination and favor. To eliminate this, all the candidates should be allotted randomly generated un-identifiable roll nos.

On the basis of the written examination evaluation, a single general merit list of all the candidates should be prepared. This list should be kept confidential. Based on the total number of available vacancies and the ratio required to be called for interviews, the required number of candidates serially from the top of the list should be called for interview. Each candidate being called for interview should be allotted a code number. The code numbers equal to the number of candidates being called for the interview will be randomly grouped equal to the number of interview boards. Envelopes containing these grouped code numbers will be given to the Chairman UPSC. He will ask the interview board chairmen to pick up any one envelope. These code numbers and his respective interview board will be informed to the candidate only 15 minutes before interview.

Now the interview board will have only code number and the candidates' qualifications, experience, hobbies etc. The interview board should be debarred from asking any personal details like his name, fathers' name, caste, religion of the candidate during interview.

Based on his assessment of the candidate, each member will award marks. If a member awards less than 50 % or more than 75 % marks, he will have to record his justification. An average of marks of all the panel members will arrive at the final marks obtained by the candidate in the interview.

One final merit list will be prepared by adding the written examination and the interview marks after decoding. Now the reservation claim of SC/ST/OBC and others will be calculated. Since there is 50% reservation, top 50% candidates from this merit list will be put in the general category list. The remaining 50% vacancies will be filled up by various reserve categories on the basis of their merit. Any reserve category candidate in the first 50% list of general category, will not be counted against reserved vacancies provided he fulfills the required criteria as per UPSC rules.

This system will be based on objectivity, transparency and will be free from casteism, bias and corruption. This system has been successfully introduced by the UP PSC in all recruitments for the last three years. Therefore, it may be possible to introduce this system at the all India level by the UPSC in all examinations conducted by them.

UPSC has commented on the issues raised in the representation. As per UPSC, roll numbers are not allotted so that caste/community of a candidate can be ascertained. The existing practice of holding separate interviews for General and Reserved category candidates is the outcome of MHA's OM No 1/1/70-Est(SCT) dated 31/7/19970. This system is being followed in majority of State PSCs except for UP PSC, Orissa PSC and Chattisgarh PSC. The said three PSCs do not disclose the caste/community status of candidates before the Interview boards. It was stated by UPSC that system of distribution of candidates among different interview boards and marking by them is internal to the working of the Commission and has been satisfactorily for years.

UPSC prepares the results of both the written exam and the final stage strictly in accordance with the procedure laid down in the examination rules notified by the Govt. While preparing the merit order, it is ensured that reserved category candidates qualifying on general merit without availing any relaxation/concession are not recommended against reserved vacancies. However, while making service allocation to recommended candidates, reserved category candidates recommended against unreserved vacancies may be adjusted against reserved vacancies by the Government, if by this process, they get a service of higher choice in the order of their preference.

In order to consider the matter, Addl. Secretary (S&V), DoP&T convened a meeting on 13.08.2007. JS (Police), MHA stated that decision should be taken by carefully weighing pros and cons and on the basis of data regarding marks obtained by candidates of various category, JS, MoSJ&E stated that it is not clear what would be the impact on the number of candidates who qualify on general standards and formal view of the Ministry would be given after due examination in the Ministry. NCSC stated that views of the Commission would be made available after approval by the Commission. JS, UPSC was of the view that there is a need of uniform standards for qualifying examination and then, if

required, relaxation can be resorted to fill the reservation quota. There was consensus that there is a need of uniformity in the process of examination and segregation of the reserved category candidate is not proper, more so, when there is no such segregation at the level of written examination.

## **B. Action taken in Commission on the proposal**

To have a better understanding and for comparison purpose, a letter dated 04.01.2008 was written to DoP&T for providing the existing procedure followed with regard to the preparation of select list for STs and other reserved category candidates. It was intimated by DoP&T on 01.07.2008 that as per the existing practice separate interviews are held for general and reserved category candidates in terms of OM No 1/1/70-Estt.(SCT) dated 31.07.1970. However, DoP&T has referred this requirement of NCST to UPSC on 24.07.2008. Reminders dated 23.09.2008, 23.10.2008 and 20.11.2008 were also issued by DoP&T to UPSC for getting this information, with copy to NCST. A D.O. letter was sent from JS, NCST to Secretary, UPSC on 05.11.2008 for this purpose, but nothing could be heard from UPSC.

In view of the above and to offer views of the Commission on this long pending issue, Shri Tsering Samphel, Hon'ble Member decided to have a discussion with Secretary, DoP&T and Secretary, UPSC for the required information on 23.12.2008 at 1500 hrs in the Commission.

During discussion it was intimated by DoP&T that they have received views of most of the departments and views of NCST is awaited. NCSC has submitted that existing system of separate interview for reserved category candidates should continue.

UPSC intimated that Commission has already commented vide their letter dated 11.05.2006 and in that existing system is also explained. Explanation of existing system beyond this will not be possible from the operation point of view. A copy of their latest reply to DoP&T dated 27.02.2008 was handed over to the NCST.

DoP&T officers mentioned that NCST may communicate their views only on the broader issue that separate interview for reserved category and unreserved category candidates should be continued to held or not without going into the details of the system.

It was decided that NCST may consider on the issue of continuation of separate interview of reserved category and unreserved category candidates or not. Any point not desirable of the suggestion in the representation from P.M.O. may also be mentioned.

### **C. Proposed recommendation of the Commission on the proposal**

The positive part of the proposal is that selection will be done purely on merit of the candidates and there won't be any scope of discrimination.

The problem is that if selection of underprivileged candidates will also be judged with the same yard stick, they may not be able to take the benefit of relaxed standards meant for them because of their weak socio-economic background.

The Commission may give their views keeping in view of these factors.