

The Times of India

High court upholds sacking of 290 on-probation postal employees

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat high court has upheld the Centre's decision to terminate services of 290 postal department employees on probation, after large scale irregularities in their recruitment process was revealed during an inquiry. Cancellation of a selection list naming another 152 job candidates was also upheld.

A bench of Justice M R Shah and Justice A S Supehia held that cancellation of the entire recruitment process by the government was proper in the instant case.

It quoted the Supreme Court, which says that there cannot be any compromise with the sanctity of selection process, and if there is a slightest doubt regarding malpractice or irregularities in conducting recruitment exam, the authority is justified in declaring the process as void.

In 2014, a recruitment drive was undertaken across the country for posts of postal assistant and sorting assistant, including recruitment for 654 vacancies in Gujarat circle. The recruiting company selected 562 candidates, and 290 of them were appointed on probation for two years, while others named in the selection list were meant to be appointed soon.

Meanwhile, the department received complaints of irregularities in recruitment process.

The vigilance inquiry conducted upon complaints received by the postal directorate found that the question paper and answer key of the recruitment exam had been leaked, and multiple instances of candidate impersonation detected.

The private firm which had conducted the recruitment, including the holding of tests and preparation of selection lists - CMC Limited - was also held responsible for the irregularities.

The probe revealed serious irregularities in six circles - Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh. Jharkhand cancelled the entire recruitment process and the exams were declared cancelled in five states including Gujarat circle. Hence the selection process was declared void with services of all selected candidates terminated in

Gujarat in December 2015. Later, the Centre handed over investigation of the case to CBI.

The 290 sacked employees in Gujarat moved the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), which concluded that the government's decision to cancel the selection process did not have legal standing, but the tribunal refrained from ordering reinstatement of the petitioners.