



অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগ

ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781 022

PRESS RELEASE

Dated Guwahati the 07 March 2017

The attention of the Commission has been drawn to a press briefing on 6th March 2017 by the Assam Public Works (APW) regarding alleged favoritism in the recruitment process to the post of Director of Agriculture.

In this connection, the following are brought to the kind notice of all concerned:

1. **24 May 2016:** Draft advertisement received from Agriculture Department. Essential qualifications mentioned were:

(a) *First class or High Second class degree in Agriculture or first class or high second class honours or master degree in a subject basic to Agriculture Science such as Botany, Chemistry etc.*

(b) *Experience in research extension work or teaching for 10 years*

(c) *Experience in Administration of Agriculture in a senior post at least for 8 years (not below the rank of Deputy Director of Agriculture or equivalent rank)*

(d) *The following qualifications will be treated as desirable additional qualifications*

(1) *Post Graduate degree or PH.D. or B.Sc. in any of the basic Agricultural Sciences like Agronomy, Agricultural Extension, Horticulture, Botany, Agricultural Botany, Agricultural Chemistry etc.*

(2) *Outstanding research training or extension as evidenced by published paper*

(3) *Experience in a top position in the field of Agricultural education or Agricultural extension*

(4) *Intimate knowledge of problems of Indian Agricultural particularly with reference to any of the rice growing regions in India.*

2. **17 Jun 2016:** The advertisement was published and the last date of receipt of applications was 7th July, 2016.

3. **23 Jun 2016:** Copy of memorandum addressed to the Secretary, Agriculture Deptt received from Assam Agricultural Service Officers' Association. The Association stated that the qualification and experience essential for the post of Director of Agriculture as shown in the advertisement do not match with the Assam Agriculture Service Rules, 1980. In the said advertisement the bracketed portion, i.e., "(not below the rank of Deputy Director of Agriculture or equivalent rank)" which figures in iv (c) of the advertisement is deemed not to be in consonance with the Service Rules. The Association felt that because of this "additional" qualification, all the deserving officers are being barred from applying for the post.

4. **01 Jul 2016:** Govt. sent a letter requesting the Commission to issue a corrigendum regarding "experience in administration of Agriculture in a senior post at least for 8 years" instead of "experience in administration of Agriculture in a senior post at least for 8 years (not below the rank of Deputy Director of Agriculture or equivalent rank)". Subsequently, and in pursuance of Govt's directive a corrigendum was issued by the Commission on 5 Jul 2016 as well as by extending the last date of receipt of application from 7.7.2016 to 20.7.2016. Altogether, 28 applications were received.

5. Subsequently, on detailed scrutiny of the applications, it emerged that the issue of experience/qualification etc was not clearly spelt out by the Deptt. The Deptt. was again requested to clarify on the below-mentioned points vide letter dated 21.9.2016 -

(i) Kinds of experiences/posts/research extension work associated with the Agriculture Deptt.

(ii) clarify the names of post which could be construed as 'senior posts' vis a vis the requirement under the head 'Educational Qualification'.

6. **26 Sep 2016:** The Govt. reply was received wherein it was stated:
- (i) an officer having worked at the level of Deputy Director or equivalent posts and above for a major period out of the prescribed period of 8 years and
 - (ii) a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience should be rendered at the level of Associate Professor and above.
7. **27 Sep 2016:** The reply being inconclusive, the Govt. was again requested to clarify on the "experiences in research extension work associated with the Agriculture Deptt". The Govt. reply was received on 1.11.2016 which reads as –
- "Schedule II (Rule 6) of Assam Agriculture Service Rules, 1980
- 1(2) 'Experience in research extension work or of teaching for 10 years' would imply working at the Grade of Associate Professor or of equivalent rank and above in a Research Institute under AAU/ICAR etc. for 10 years.
- 1(3) 'Experience in Administration of Agriculture in a senior post at least for 8 years' would imply officer having worked at the level of Deputy Director of Agriculture or equivalent post and above for a major period of the prescribed period of 8 years.'
8. Subsequently, all the applications were re-checked. After a thorough scrutiny by the office branch, it was further decided to check with the Directorate, particularly regarding the status of employees at Toklai Research Institute (TRI). The Registrar of the Directorate of Agriculture informed that TRI falls under the aegis of the Govt. of India. However, it was suggested that more details should be found out before coming to a conclusive decision.
9. Subsequently, Secretary, APSC carried out further enquiry from TRI regarding the status of the applicants from TRI and opined that the applicants possessing the requisite service experience in a higher rank with higher grade pay may be called for the interview, keeping these at par with the advertisement. The Chairman (I/C) however felt that further clarifications were still required.
10. **17 Jan 2017:** Accordingly, the Commission wanted to be certain about the educational qualifications, experiences, research works, equivalence in pay scales etc. as regard to Central Govt./State Govt employees. The Commission, therefore, approached the Dept. accordingly and a discussion was held on 17.1.2017 in the Commission's office where two Additional Secretaries of Agriculture Deptt. attended.
11. After a threadbare discussion with the Govt. officials and taking all these into account, "Accepted list" and "Reject list" were prepared and put up to the Commission on 20.1.2017 and the date for interview was scheduled on 27.1.2017. Two candidates, namely, Dharendra Nath Kalita and Dr Sunil Kr Pathak were shortlisted for interview.
12. On publication of the "Select and Reject lists", Dr HK Dutta and Dr Dipjyoti Rajkhowa whose names figured in the "Reject list" had approached the Commission requesting the Commission to call them for the interview as Dr Dipjyoti Rajkhowa stated that he had submitted required documents while Dr HK Dutta cited an earlier instance and prayed that he should be allowed time to submit the requisite documents. In order to remove any misgivings, the Commission in an emergent meeting on 25.1.2017 felt that there is a need to re-examine once again all applications threadbare so as to ensure that none of the applicants with the requisite qualifications is left out.
- Though the earlier "Select list" was published after discussion with the officials of the Agriculture Deptt on 17.1.2017 as stated above, however the Commission felt there was still need for some clarifications particularly "as regards to senior level post" as mentioned in the advertisement. Hence, it was decided by the Commission to postpone the interview to 10.2.2017 instead of 27.1.2017. Since re-examination of all documents would require time, the Commission further decided that it would be prudent to postpone the interview until further orders and accordingly a notification was issued on 30.1.2017.
13. Meanwhile, the Commission on 7.2.2017 officially received the order of the Hon'ble Gauhati High Court passed in WP(C) No.448/2017 staying the proceedings and accordingly it was notified. The Commission is complying with the orders of Hon'ble Gauhati High Court and will be bound by the orders of the Hon'ble Court.

14. From the above, it is clearly seen that the Commission has taken all measures to ensure proper transparency in the entire selection process. The Commission has tried to get maximum clarifications on the requisite qualifications like "senior level post" and "experience in extension work" which were not clear and that was one of the main reasons for postponing the interview.

15. It is pertinent to mention that the Commission has been making concerted efforts towards a fair and time-bound recruitment process and the Commission looks for support from all concerned, including APW. It would have been highly appreciated if APW had approached the Commission to seek clarifications on any of the issues at any time. The Commission opines that such personal vilification will not serve the cause of the APSC to become a transparent and effective organization which is sincerely, genuinely and selflessly being attempted by the present dispensation and which the Commission believes is the goal of APW as well.

Sd/- Secretary
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