

CWP-17293-2026

2026:PHHC:084857



**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA  
AT CHANDIGARH**

137

CWP-17293-2026

Date of Decision: **27.05.2026**

Manpreet Kaur

....Petitioner

**VERSUS**

Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL)

...Respondent

**CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR**

Present : Mr. Sirat Sapra, Advocate for the petitioner.

Mr. Divanshu Jain, Advocate for the respondent/PSPCL.

**HARPREET SINGH BRAR, J. (Oral)**

1. The present writ petition has been filed under Articles 226/227 of the Constitution of India making the following prayers:-

*“I. To issue writ in the nature of Certiorari for quashing Note (iii) under Clause 2 of the Eligibility Criteria contained in Advertisement No. CRA-316/26 (Annexure P-1), insofar as it prescribes the last date of online application/registration as the cut-off date for possessing the requisite educational qualifications for recruitment to the post of Junior Engineer/Electrical, being arbitrary, unreasonable, discriminatory and violative of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution of India;*

2026:PHHC:084857



*II. To issue writ in the nature of Mandamus directing the respondent to consider the date of document verification or any other subsequent stage of the recruitment process as the cut-off date for determining possession of the requisite qualifications for recruitment to the post of Junior Engineer/Electrical pursuant to Advertisement No. CRA-316/26, instead of the last date of submission of online applications, in the interest of justice, fairness and equity;*

*III. To issue writ in the nature of Mandamus directing the respondent to accept the online application and permit the petitioner to appear and participate in the recruitment examination/process for the post of Junior Engineer/Electrical pursuant to Advertisement No. CRA-316/26, subject to the condition that the petitioner shall produce proof of having passed the requisite degree/diploma course on a date subsequent to the cut-off date fixed by the respondent, including at the stage of document verification or any other stage as may be deemed appropriate by this Hon'ble Court during the pendency of the present petition;*

*IV. To issue writ in the nature of Mandamus directing the respondent not to reject the candidature of the petitioner for the post of Junior Engineer/Electrical pursuant to Advertisement No. CRA-316/26 and further directing that till the next date of hearing, no coercive or precipitative steps qua the candidature of the petitioner be taken by the respondent;*

*V. To further issue appropriate writ, order or direction directing the respondent to permit the petitioner to edit/correct her online application form or, in the alternative, to accept and consider the candidature/application of the petitioner for*



*recruitment to the post of Junior Engineer/Electrical pursuant to Advertisement No. CRA-316/26 despite the petitioner having mentioned approximate aggregate marks obtained in the diploma course and not having selected the “Result Awaited” option in the online application form, as prescribed under the terms and conditions of the advertisement, inasmuch as the said act was bona fide and without any intention to misrepresent or conceal facts.*

*VI. To issue writ in the nature of Mandamus directing the respondent to consider and decide representation dated 07.05.2026 (Annexure P-9) submitted by the petitioner by passing a reasoned and speaking order within a time bound manner and to clarify whether candidates like the petitioner, whose final result/certificate is awaited and who are yet to appear in the remaining examination(s), are eligible to apply for the post of Junior Engineer/Electrical under Note (iii) of Clause 2 of Advertisement No. CRA-316/26.”*

### **Contentions of Petitioner**

2. Learned counsel for the petitioner, *inter alia*, contends that the respondent-PSPCL issued Advertisement No. CRA-316/26 dated 13.04.2026 (Annexure P-1) inviting online applications for recruitment to 622 posts of Junior Engineer/Electrical. As per the terms and conditions of the advertisement, the last date for submission of online applications was fixed as 10.05.2026. Learned counsel further draws the attention of this Court to Note (iii) under Clause 2 of the eligibility criteria contained in Advertisement No. CRA-316/26 (Annexure P-1) and submits that candidates

CWP-17293-2026

2026:PHHC:084857



who had appeared/were appearing in the relevant examination and whose result was awaited were also held eligible to apply, subject to acquisition of the requisite qualification up to the last date of submission of online applications.

2.1 Learned counsel submits that the petitioner is pursuing Diploma in Electrical Engineering from a recognized institution, as is evident from Annexure P-5, and has already completed all semesters of the course as well as mandatory industrial training/internship, as reflected from Annexures P-7 and P-8. However, due to unavoidable circumstances, the petitioner could not appear in one examination, which is now scheduled to be conducted in June, 2026 and the final result/certificate is expected in July/August, 2026. It is contended that the petitioner had submitted a representation dated 07.05.2026 (Annexure P-9) seeking clarification and provisional permission to apply under the aforesaid advertisement and also forwarded the same through email dated 07.05.2026 (Annexure P-10). However, despite the urgency involved with the last date for submission of applications fast approaching, no clarification or decision was communicated by the respondent-authorities.

2.2 Learned counsel further submits that in order to safeguard her candidature, the petitioner submitted the online application form on 09.05.2026 (Annexure P-12) and mentioned approximate aggregate marks obtained in the diploma course in a *bona fide* manner, after calculating the

CWP-17293-2026

2026:PHHC:084857



marks of all completed semesters. Subsequently, the petitioner came to know that candidates whose result was awaited were required to mention “Result Awaited” in the relevant column of the application form. It is vehemently contended that the petitioner had no intention whatsoever to mislead the authorities or conceal any material fact and the mentioning of approximate aggregate marks was purely without malice and purely *bona fide* in nature.

2.3 Learned counsel further argues that the eligibility condition requiring possession of the requisite qualification as on the last date of submission of online applications is self-contradictory, arbitrary, unreasonable and violative of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution of India, particularly when the recruitment examination and document verification are yet to be conducted. It is submitted that the fixation of such cut-off date defeats the very object of the recruitment process and unjustly excludes deserving candidates like the petitioner, who are on the verge of acquiring the requisite qualification much before the completion of the selection process. Despite submission of representation dated 07.05.2026 (Annexure P-9), the grievance of the petitioner still remains unaddressed by the respondent-authorities.

### **Contentions of respondent**

3. *Per contra*, learned counsel for the respondents submits that the terms and conditions stipulated in Advertisement No. CRA-316/26 are

*CWP-17293-2026*

2026:PHHC:084857



binding and sacrosanct in nature and are required to be strictly adhered to by all candidates participating in the recruitment process. It is contended that any candidate failing to fulfil the eligibility criteria prescribed under the advertisement on the stipulated cut-off date automatically renders herself ineligible for consideration. Learned counsel further submits that the eligibility conditions contained in the advertisement cannot be diluted or relaxed by this Court in exercise of writ jurisdiction, particularly when the same are uniformly applicable to all aspirants.

3.1 It is further argued that the petitioner admittedly did not possess the requisite qualification as on the last date prescribed for submission of online applications and, therefore, no enforceable or vested right accrues in her favour merely on account of submission of the application form. Learned counsel submits that mere participation in the recruitment process or filing of an application does not confer any indefeasible right of appointment or even consideration, unless the candidate satisfies all eligibility conditions in terms of the advertisement. It is further contended that recruitment must be conducted strictly in accordance with the notified terms and conditions of the advertisement so as to maintain transparency, fairness and equality amongst all candidates participating in the selection process.

### **Consideration and findings**

*CWP-17293-2026*

2026:PHHC:084857



4. Having heard learned counsel for the parties and after perusing the record of the case with their able assistance, it transpires that as per Note (iii) under Clause 2 of the eligibility criteria contained in Advertisement No. CRA-316/26 (Annexure P-1), candidates who had appeared/were appearing in the relevant examination and whose result was awaited could also apply, however, such candidates were mandatorily required to acquire the requisite essential qualification by the last date of submission of online applications and to produce proof thereof. Thus, there is no ambiguity in the stipulation contained in the advertisement (Annexure P-1) that possession of the essential qualifications on or before the prescribed cut-off date was mandatory for all aspirants seeking participation in the recruitment process.

4.1 The condition prescribing the last date of submission of online applications as the cut-off date for acquiring the requisite qualification cannot be said to be arbitrary, unreasonable or violative of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution of India. Rather, fixation of a cut-off date has a reasonable nexus with the object sought to be achieved, namely ensuring certainty, uniformity and finality in the recruitment process. The terms and conditions of an advertisement are binding upon all candidates equally and cannot be altered midway so as to confer advantage upon a particular candidate.

4.2 Admittedly, the petitioner did not possess the requisite qualification as on the last date prescribed for submission of online



applications i.e. 10.05.2026, inasmuch as one examination still remained to be cleared by her and the final result/certificate was expected only in July/August, 2026. Merely because the petitioner was likely to acquire the qualification at a later stage would not entitle her to seek relaxation of the eligibility conditions contained in the advertisement.

4.3 The practice of prescribing a cut-off date for acquiring essential qualifications is not merely a formality but a well-entrenched legal principle rooted in constitutional values of equality, fairness, non-arbitrariness, and administrative efficiency. The recruitment process will be rendered open-ended and disorderly if time frames are not demarcated for achieving milestones. Rather, it is the duty of the recruitment agency to ensure no confusion or uncertainty clouds the process and all candidates are provided an equal opportunity to prove their eligibility, within the confines of the advertisement. Time and again, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has also reiterated that such cut-off dates are vital to establish the integrity of the recruitment process and thus, can only be interfered with in rare cases of pronounced arbitrariness or *mala fide*.

4.4. A two-Judge bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Bhupinderpal Singh and others vs. State of Punjab (2000) 5 SCC 262***, speaking through Justice R.C. Lahoti observed as under in this regard:



*“13. Placing rallance on the decisions of this Court in Ashok Kumar Sharma v. Chander Shekhar & Anr., JT 1997(4) SC 99 : 1997(2) SCT 208 (SC); A.P. Public Service Commission v. B. Sarat Chandra & Ors., 1990(4) SLR 235; The Distt. Collector and Chairman, Vizianagaram (Social Welfare Residential School Society) Vizianagaram and Anr. v. M. Tripura Sundari Devi, 1990(4) SLR 237; Mrs. Rekha Chaturvedi v. University of Rajasthan & Ors., JT 1993(1) SC 220 : 1993(2) SCT 279 (SC); Dr. M.V. Nair v. Union of India & Ors., 1993(2) SCT 77 (SC); and U.P. Public Service Commission, U.P., Allahabad & Anr. v. Alpana, JT 1994(1) SC 94 : 1994(1) SCT 701 (SC), the High Court has held (i) that the cut off date by reference to which the eligibility requirement must be satisfied by the candidate seeking a public employment is the date appointed by the relevant service rules and if there be no cut off date appointed by the rules then such date as may be appointed for the purpose in the advertisement calling for applications; (ii) that if there be no such date appointed then the eligibility criteria shall be applied by reference to the last date appointed by which the applications have to be received by the competent authority. The view taken by the High Court is supported by several decisions of this Court and is therefore well settled and hence cannot be found fault with. However, there are certain special features of this case which need to be taken care of and justice done by invoking the jurisdiction under Article 142 of the Constitution vested in this Court so as to advance the cause of justice.*

2026:PHHC:084857



14. In view of several decisions of this Court relied on by the High Court and referred to herein above, it was expected of the State Government notifying the vacancies to have clearly laid down and stated the cut off date by reference to which the applicants were required to satisfy their eligibility. This was not done. It was pointed out on behalf of the several appellants/petitioners before this Court that the practice prevalent in Punjab has been to determine the eligibility by reference to the date of interview and there are innumerable cases wherein such candidates have been seeking employment as were not eligible on the date of making the applications or the last date appointed for receipt of the applications but were in the process of acquiring eligibility qualifications and did acquire the same by the time they were called for and appeared at the interview. Several such persons have been appointed but no one has challenged their appointments and they have continued to be in public employment. Such a loose practice, though prevalent, cannot be allowed to be continued and must be treated to have been put to an end. The reason is apparent. **The applications made by such candidates as were not qualified but were in the process of acquiring eligibility qualifications would be difficult to be scrutinised and subjected to the process of approval or elimination and would only result in creating confusion and uncertainty. Many would be such applicants who would be called to face interview but shall have to be returned blank if they failed to acquire requisite eligibility qualifications by the time of interview. In our opinion the authorities of the State should be tied down to the principles governing the cut off date for testing the eligibility qualifications on the principles deducible**



**from decided cases of this Court and stated herein above which have now to be treated as the settled service jurisprudence.”**

4.5. The issue also stands squarely covered by the judgment rendered by the Hon’ble Supreme Court in *SLP (Civil) No.32964 of 2025* titled as *Rajasthan Public Service Commission vs. Lavanshu Sankhla & others*, decided on 04.05.2026, wherein the question under consideration was whether the relevant date for acquiring the minimum essential qualification is the date of submission of application pursuant to the advertisement or any time prior to commencement of the interview process. The relevant extract thereof reads as under:-

*“18. A conjoint reading of the advertisement and the governing rules makes it evident that the relevant date for determining eligibility, including educational qualification, is the date of submission of the application. This is for the reason that the eligibility of a candidate is assessed on the basis of the particulars and documents furnished at the time of application, and there is no provision for subsequent supplementation or re-submission of such documents at a later stage.*

xxx

xxx

xx

23. *We are also unable to concur with the reasoning of the High Court that, where two interpretations of the guidelines are possible, the one favourable to the candidates ought to be adopted. **Such an approach, based on considerations of enlarging the pool of candidates or promoting competition,***



**cannot be invoked when the language of the advertisement admits of only one clear and unambiguous interpretation. The prescribed eligibility condition unequivocally requires possession of the degree at the relevant point of time.**

24. Even otherwise, acceptance of the respondents' contention, that candidates who acquire the qualification at any stage prior to the interview should be treated as eligible, would introduce uncertainty into the selection process and impose an unwarranted administrative burden upon the appellant-RPSC in tracking subsequent acquisitions of qualifications.

*(Emphasis supplied)*”

4.6. A two-Judge of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Ashok Kumar Sharma vs. Chander Shekhar (1997) 4 SCC 18***, opined as follows:

“6. ...The proposition that where applications are called for prescribing a particular date as the last date for filing the applications, the eligibility of the candidates shall have to be judged with reference to that date and that date alone, is a well-established one. A person who acquires the prescribed qualification subsequent to such prescribed date cannot be considered at all. An advertisement or notification issued/published calling for applications constitutes a representation to the public and the authority issuing it is bound by such representation. It cannot act contrary to it. One reason behind this proposition is that if it were known that persons who obtained the qualifications after the prescribed date but before the date of interview would be allowed to appear for the interview, other similarly placed persons could

CWP-17293-2026

2026:PHHC:084857



*also have applied. Just because some of the persons had applied notwithstanding that they had not acquired the prescribed qualifications by the prescribed date, they could not have been treated on a preferential basis. Their applications ought to have been rejected at the inception itself. This proposition is indisputable and in fact was not doubted or disputed in the majority Judgment.”*

5. In view of the aforesaid facts and circumstances as well as the law laid down by the Hon’ble Supreme Court, this Court is of the considered opinion that the petitioner is not entitled to any relief as prayed for in the present writ petition. No ground is made out for interference in exercise of extraordinary writ jurisdiction under Articles 226/227 of the Constitution of India.

6. Accordingly, finding no merit in the present writ petition, the same is hereby dismissed.

7. Pending miscellaneous application(s), if any, shall also stand disposed of accordingly.

**(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)**  
**JUDGE**

**27.05.2026**

*Puneet Chawla*

Whether speaking/reasoned. : Yes/No  
Whether Reportable. : Yes/No