

## **Press Brief on Recruitment of Act Apprentices**

IR provides training to applicants in designated trades such as fitter, welder etc. under the provisions of the Apprentices Act since August 1963. These applicants are enrolled by workshops, sheds and other field units etc. based on their matriculation marks without undergoing any competitive examination or selection process. Though there was no statutory requirement, these apprentices were being engaged by railways as Substitutes against level 1 posts, till 2017.

- Substitutes are temporary appointees who can be engaged by zonal railways to meet any exigencies and operational requirements. While such appointees are given benefits due to temporary railway servants, they are not permanent employees unless they undergo due process.
- However with a view to bringing fairness, transparency and removing any discretionary element in railway recruitments, a centralized open, fair, transparent selection process comprising written test and physical efficiency test was prescribed for all open recruitment to level 1 in 2017. Accordingly all candidates would have to appear for a common nationwide computer based test (CBT), following which they would undergo physical efficiency test and other recruitment processes. The provision to engage apprentices as substitutes at the zonal level by General Managers was therefore withdrawn and all employment opportunities across the entire Indian Railways were made open to all candidates across the country.
- The Apprentices Act had been amended in 2014 whereby section 22 of the Act statutorily obligated employer to formulate a policy for recruiting apprentices that have been trained under the provisions of the Act. Pursuant to this amendment, the railways made a policy to give preference to railway apprentices in open market recruitment of level 1 posts, to the extent of 20% of the posts advertised.
- Therefore, though railway apprentices appear for written test/ physical efficiency test along with all other candidates, they are considered over and above all others for appointment, so long as they obtain minimum qualifying marks and meet prescribed medical standards. In addition to this preference, these apprentices are also provided relaxation in age limit for appearing in the recruitment examinations
- Accordingly, 12504 out of 63202 Level 1 posts advertised vide CEN 02/2018 were earmarked for such candidates in the common recruitment exam held in 2018. Similarly, 20734 Level-1 posts, out of 103769 posts advertised have been earmarked for these apprentices under CEN RRC 01/2019, exam for which is yet to be held.
- These apprentices have been demanding that they should be given appointment in the railways under General Managers powers as was being done earlier. They are unwilling to

undergo the prescribed recruitment process, namely written test and physical efficiency test that other candidates including apprentices from other industries are subject to.

- The exemption sought by the railway apprentices is discriminatory and would reduce employment opportunities available for other candidates in the country. Their demand cannot be accepted as it is violative of Constitutional provisions and Apex Court judgment in matters of public employment whereby any employment cannot be provided except through a procedure involving fair selection