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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

+ **W.P.(C) 5370/2026 & CM APPL. 26282/2026**

NEERAJ PRAKASH

.....Petitioner

Through: Mr. Ajay Kr. Singh, Mr. Yatharth Singh, Ms. Shrishti Gautam, Mr. Divyansh Singh, Advocates.

versus

STATE BANK OF INDIA & ORS.

.....Respondents

Through: Mr. Santosh Kumar Rout, SC for SBI.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANJEEV NARULA

ORDER

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21.04.2026

W.P.(C) 5370/2026

1. The Petitioner, presently working as Chief Manager (System), Scale-IV with the Respondent Bank, has filed this writ petition, challenging the downgrading of his Annual Appraisal Reports¹ for the years 2024-25 and 2025-26. It is stated that while the Reporting Authority had awarded higher gradings ('AA' and 'AAA' respectively), the Reviewing Authority downgraded the same to 'BB' without assigning reasons and without affording an opportunity of hearing to the Petitioner. The Petitioner claims that such downgrading has resulted in his exclusion from consideration for promotion to Scale-V, despite consistent past performance and eligibility.

2. In the aforesaid backdrop, the Petitioner, *inter alia*, seeks quashing of

¹ "AARs"



the downgraded AAR gradings of 'BB' for the years 2024-25 and 2025-26, and further prays for a direction to the Respondent to treat him as eligible for promotion to Scale-V by ignoring the impugned gradings.

3. Issue notice. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Rout, Standing Counsel for SBI, accepts notice.

4. Counter affidavit be filed within a period of six weeks from today. Rejoinder thereto, if any, be filed within a period of four weeks thereafter.

5. Issue notice to the remaining Respondents by all permissible modes, upon filing of process fee, returnable on the next date of hearing.

6. Re-notify on 24th August, 2026.

CM APPL. 26282/2026 (seeking directions)

7. By way of the present application, the Petitioner seeks a direction permitting him to participate in the interview process scheduled on 21st and 22nd April, 2026 for promotion from Scale IV to Scale V, during the pendency of the captioned petition.

8. Counsel for the Petitioner submits that the Petitioner's request for upgradation of his AAR grading is presently pending consideration before the Appellate Authority. It is contended that, in the interregnum, the Petitioner ought to be permitted to participate in the interview process, as failure to do so would result in irreparable prejudice, inasmuch as he would lose the opportunity for promotion in the event his grading is subsequently upgraded.

9. In light of the foregoing, it is directed that the Petitioner shall be permitted to participate in the interview process for promotion from Scale-IV to Scale-V. The Petitioner's result shall be kept in a sealed cover. The Petitioner's participation, and any consequential benefit thereof, shall



remain subject to the outcome of the present proceedings, as well as the decision on the Petitioner's request for upgradation presently pending before the Appellate Authority.

10. With the above directions, the application is disposed of.

SANJEEV NARULA, J

APRIL 21, 2026/ab