

The Times of India

Merger blues for sportspersons: No recruitment in SBI for last 23 years

HYDERABAD: The merger of the associate banks with the State Bank of India (SBI) a couple of months ago has put the sportspersons especially of the State Bank of Hyderabad (SBH) in a quandary. SBH was one of the last few banks to recruit sportspersons on a regular basis and that investment into sports has paid them rich dividends over the years. On the other hand, the SBI had stopped recruiting sportspersons for more than two decades and as a result their team - consisting mostly of veterans - has been playing in the lower division.

For more than a decade, SBH has dominated the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) premier division league and have also done well in the BCCI corporate tournament - winning the title in 2011. The merger, fear the sportspersons, has thrown all the good work out of the window. For starters, the SBH players will have to play for SBI from this season as the HCA officials haven't agreed to the request of the bank men to allow them to continue having two teams in the league. As such, there will no longer be a SBH team.

The result is that some players will miss out on playing for the bank. In all probability it will be the 'veterans' who will take a big hit. The SBI had conducted selection trials to pick the players for the league season this year. Out of the 18 players selected, 15 of them are from the erstwhile SBH team. The SBI players, who are left out, will now begin to feel the heat.

The players say the loss of 'perks' will affect their performances. "The players were able to perform so well because of the 'freedom' they got at the bank. The players were allowed to leave the bank around 3 p.m. so that they can attend the practice sessions. But now, we have to stay in the bank till 5 p.m and how can we train?" a player bemoaned.

Most of the players were placed in the head office and hence had a fair amount of leeway but now the players are being posted in the branches and that means they will not be given any 'concession'.

Hoopsters fight from recruitment

What is more worrying for the players is that recruitment will come to an end. The SBI has made no moves to recruit sportspersons over the years despite several representations from the players - especially the basketballers. "The last recruitment was way back in 1994. Since then we have been trying to impress the management of their corporate responsibility towards sports but all our pleas have fallen on deaf ears," said a former international basketball player.

He said that there is no official ban on recruitment of sportspersons in six games (basketball, football, cricket, kabaddi, table tennis and volleyball) but the bank management was not keen on following the Government of India policy vide its letter dated 16.12.1992 with regard to recruitment of outstanding sportspersons in Public Sector Banks.

"As per the information provided by banks they have their own recruitment policy. Department of Sports have written to various banks and Public Sector undertakings, inter-alia, to recruit sportspersons and given them incentives and promotions in case of their success in Asian Games/Commonwealth Games/Olympics," Vijay Goel, minister of state for youth affairs and sports, had stated in an answer to an unstarred question (2556) in the Lok Sabha on December 1, 2016.

The banks, contrary to their claims, haven't adhered to the government advice. "The banks are bluffing and showing old recruitments. There is no new recruitment (sports quota) in any of the banks," the hoopster added.

"SB of Saurashtra and SB Indore too had stopped recruitment after their merger with SBI. Same may be the fate of the SB of Hyderabad. In the SBI most of the players are on the verge of superannuation but the management hasn't made any move to infuse fresh blood into the teams," the player said.

The Sports & Games Players Association has been fighting to get the recruitments restored. Couple of months ago, a case has been filed in the High Court of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana State (WP No.11763/2017 and WPSR 62802/2017).