

REGISTERED



ORDER

GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB
SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

No. SO(Estt)20-160/2016: WHEREAS, while serving at the Government Special Education Centre, Yazman, District Bahawalpur, Ms. **Qurat Ul Ain**, Speech Therapist (BS-17), previously posted at Govt. Special Education Centre, Yazman, District Bahawalpur, presently, directed to report to Special Education Department ('**accused officer**') submitted a request for the grant of 730 days of ex-Pakistan Extra-Ordinary Leave (without pay) from **01.05.2022** to **30.04.2024** to visit Malaysia. Upon examination, her leave for a period of **01.05.2022** to **31.10.2022** (without pay) was accepted vide order dated **27.04.2022**. Subsequently, she requested for extension in Extra-Ordinary Leave (without pay) for **550 days** w.e.f **01.11.2022** to **30.04.2024**. Her request for extension of leave was granted with the directions to report back to the department immediately after the expiry of leave, vide order dated **27.10.2022**. However, before the expiry of the approved leave, the accused officer further requested further extension in Extra-Ordinary Leave (without pay) from **01.05.2024** to **30.04.2025**, which after due deliberation and examination was **rejected** by the Competent Authority vide order dated **22.05.2024** and further request was also rejected vide letter dated **15.08.2024**, followed by subsequent reminders dated **03.09.2024**, **23.09.2024**, **14.10.2024**, and **25.10.2024**, to report back to the department immediately otherwise disciplinary proceedings under the Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline, and Accountability (PEEDA) Act, 2006 shall be initiated against her but she failed to comply with these directives and did not resume her duty upon the expiration of her approved leave on **30.04.2024**. By failing to re-join her duties after **30.04.2024**, she was found willfully absent from duty w.e.f. **01.05.2024 to date**, thus guilty of misconduct.

2. **AND WHEREAS**, given the circumstances and the fact of the case, absence of the accused officer and on account of existence of adequate documentary evidence on file, *while dispensing with regular inquiry in view of documentary evidence available on record under Section 5(1)(b) of the Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline and Accountability Act, 2006 ("Act")*, disciplinary proceedings were initiated against the accused officer under Section 7(b) read with Section 5(1)(a) of the Act *ibid* vide Show Cause Notice dated **12.12.2024** on the following charge of misconduct on account of absence from duty;

"You have been found willfully absent from your duty w.e.f. 01.05.2024 to date without any intimation or prior permission / approval of leave by the Competent Authority. Moreover, you failed to comply with the

directives issued by the department to report back to your duties immediately upon the expiry of your approved Ex-Pakistan Extra-Ordinary Leave. Despite repeated reminders dated 15.08.2024, 03.09.2024, 23.09.2024, 14.10.2024, and 25.10.2024, you did not join your duties."

3. **AND WHEREAS**, through afore mentioned Show Cause Notice, the accused officer was directed to submit her written reply within seven (07) days. Accordingly, on 23.12.2024, the accused officer submitted a written reply which was examined and found unsatisfactory, therefore, in order to meet the ends of justice and to finalize the disciplinary proceedings, the accused officer was afforded an opportunity of personal hearing under Section 7(d) of the Act *ibid* and vide letter dated 14.01.2025, she was directed to appear before Deputy Secretary, Special Education / Hearing Officer appointed under Section 7(d) of the Act *ibid*, for personal hearing on 22.01.2025.

4. **AND WHEREAS**, the Hearing Officer, after providing reasonable opportunities for a personal hearing to the accused officer, submitted a report stating that on 22.01.2025, the accused officer did not appear. For the sake of justice, another opportunity was granted to her and she was directed to appear on 17.02.2025. On 17.02.2025, she attended the personal hearing proceedings and reiterated the stance already taken by her in her reply and requested for exoneration from the charge.

5. **AND WHEREAS**, the Hearing Officer, after a meticulous examination of the record, observed that the accused officer failed to produce a shred of documentary evidence or medical certification to lend credence to her claim of health-related absence. While she contended that her medical treatment was covered under her husband's health insurance in Malaysia, she did not present a single verifiable document from any relevant medical institution or clinic to support her stance. This glaring omission leaves her justification hanging by a thread. In light of this, the Hearing Officer concluded that the charge of misconduct, stemming from her unauthorized absence from duty with effect from 01.05.2024 to date, stands proven beyond a shadow of a doubt.

6. **AND WHEREAS**, upon thorough review and consideration of all aspects and materials related to the case, including the written response of the accused officer as well as the report from the Hearing Officer, it has been observed that the accused officer was granted Ex-Pakistan Extra-Ordinary Leave (without pay) for the period from 01.05.2022 to 30.04.2024. However, upon the expiry of her approved leave on 30.04.2024, she failed to report back to her duties as required. Despite repeated reminders and directives issued by the department on 15.08.2024, 03.09.2024, 23.09.2024, 14.10.2024, and 25.10.2024, she did not resume her duties. Her absence from 01.05.2024 to date was deemed wilful and unauthorized, as she did not obtain

prior approval or permission from the Competent Authority for any extension of leave beyond 30.04.2024 and her applications for extension were rejected. A wide through the record shows that the accused officer had submitted a Surety Bond, binding herself to the terms that she would return to Pakistan and resume her duties upon the expiry of her leave. By failing to rejoin her duties after 30.04.2024, she has violated the terms of the Surety Bond, specifically Clause 3, which requires her to return and resume duty, and Clause 4, which obligates her to pay a sum of Rs. 3,00,000/- to the Governor in the event of a breach. It is also clear from the record that during the hearing proceedings before the Hearing Officer, the accused officer did not provide any documents or medical certificates to substantiate her claim of health-related absence. She failed to provide any medical certificates or documentary evidence to substantiate her claim of ongoing medical treatment. While she mentioned that her medical treatments were covered under her husband's health insurance in Malaysia, she did not submit any verifiable documents from the relevant medical institutions or clinics to support her stance. This lack of evidence weakens her justification for her prolonged absence. Perusal of record further transpires that the accused officer provided additional reasons for her delayed return, including a scheduled medical appointment for Atopic Dermatitis (Eczema) on 13.01.2025, high flight costs during the holiday season, and her husband's Ph.D. viva voce scheduled for 24.01.2025. But she did not provide any documentary evidence to corroborate these claims, such as medical appointment records, or her husband's viva voce schedule. Moreover, a detailed examination of the accused officer's reply, in conjunction with the available record, reveals that instead of denying the allegations leveled against her, she admitted to her misconduct. The accused officer's conduct, as evidenced by her admission of guilt regarding her unauthorized absence from duty without prior leave approval. After a thorough review of the record, no merit in the justification provided by the accused officer for her absence is found.

7. **NOW THEREFORE, I, Shahida Farrukh Naveed**, Secretary Special Education / Competent Authority in the instant case, after having thoroughly reviewed all relevant aspects and materials pertaining to the case, and in the exercise of the powers vested in me under Section 7(f) read in conjunction with Section 4 of the PEEDA Act, 2006, have concluded that the charge of misconduct, specifically regarding the absence from duty commencing on May 1, 2024, to the present date, as outlined in the Show Cause Notice, has been fully substantiated. In consideration of the severity of the proven charge and the mitigating circumstances, including the medical issues of the accused officer and the duration of absence (*nearly ten months, which is less than one year*), and recognizing that the accused officer is a regular employee of the department, I have decided to adopt a lenient approach. Consequently, I hereby impose the minor penalty of "**withholding of annual increments for a period of five years**" in terms of Section 4(1)(a)(ii) of the PEEDA Act, 2006 on the accused officer.

8. **NOTWITHSTANDING ABOVE**, the accused officer is hereby directed to immediately report to her previous place of duty i.e., Govt. Special Education Centre,

Yazman, District Bahawalpur. The period of her absence from May 1, 2024, until today (the date of this order) shall be considered as Extraordinary Leave without pay.

Shahida 27/3/2025.
(SHAHIDA FARRUKH NAVEED)
SECRETARY to
GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB
SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT /
COMPETENT AUTHORITY

Dated Lahore, the
April 28th, 2025

No. & Date Even:

A copy is forwarded for information and necessary action to the:-

1. The Accountant General Punjab, Lahore.
2. The Director General, Special Education Punjab, Lahore.
3. The District Education Officer (Special Education), Bahawalpur.
4. Headmaster/Headmistress, Govt. Special Education Centre, Yazman, District Bahawalpur.
5. Accused officer / **Ms. Qurat Ul Ain**, Speech Therapist (BS-17), previously posted at Govt. Special Education Centre, Yazman, District Bahawalpur, presently, directed to report to Special Education Department. Resident of House No. 82-B, Sattelite Town, Bahawalpur. Mob No. 0348-6533282.
6. PS to Secretary Special Education Department, Lahore.

[Signature] 28/03/25
SECTION OFFICER (ESTT.-I)
SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT