

#### CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL,

#### **CHANDIGARH BENCH**

Date of decision: 25.08.2009

CORAM:

# HON'BLE MRS. SHYAMA DOGRA, JUDICIAL MEMBER & HON'BLE MR. KHUSHI RAM, ADMINISTRATIVE MEMBER

## (1) T.A.NO.84-HR-2009 (CWP NO.4165 OF 2006)

- Dewan Chand son of Sh. Kewal Ram, presently working as Assistant Director (NC), office of Chief General Manager Telecom, BSNL, Haryana Circle, Ambala Cantt.
- Tilak Raj son of late Sh. Jhaman Lal, presently working as Sub Divisional Engineer (Mobile Plg.), Office of General Manager Telecom District, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Ambala Cantt.
- Satish Kumar Gupta son of Late Sh. Sat Pal Gupta, presently working as Sub Divisional Engineer (Legal), Office of General Manager Telecom District, BSNL, Ambala Cantt.
- 4. S.K.Gupta son of Late Shri B.R.Gupta, presently working as Assistant General Manager (A) (Lookafter), Office of Chief General Manager Telecom, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Haryana Circle, Ambala Cantt.
  - Madan Lal Sharma son of Sh. Pishori Lal presently working as Assistant Director (NC), Office of Chief General Manager Telecom, BSNL, Haryana Circle, Ambala Cantt.

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6. Pawan Kumar Kaushik son of Late Sh. Ram Sarup Kaushik, presently working as Assistant Director (LL), Office of Chief General Manager Telecom, BSNL, Haryana Circle, Ambala Cantt.

By: Mr. R.K.Sharma, Advocate.

#### Petitioners

### Versus

- Union of India through the Secretary, Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Department of Telecommunications, 421, Sanchar Bhawan, 20 Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001.
- Chairman-cum-Managing Director, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited,
   Statesmen House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi.
- 3. Senior Deputy Director General (Personnel), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Statesmen House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi.

By: Mr. V.K.Sharma, Advocate.

- 4. K.K.Mewani, SDE office of GMTD, Faridabad.
- 5 . Rajesh Banta, SDE, office of GMTD, Ambala.
- 6 . J.C. Lather, SDE office of GMTD, Hissar.
- 7. Archana Dua, SDE office of GMTD, Faridabad.
- 8. Davinder Kalra, AD (AMC), office of CGMT HR Circle, Ambala.
- 9. Rajni Banta, SDE office of GMTD, Ambala.
- 10 . Anjali Sethi, SDE office of GMTD, Hisar.

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- 11. C.B. Davra, SDE office of GMTD, Faridabad.
- 12. Rakesh Kumar Garg, SDE office of GMTD, Ambala.
- 13 . Rajesh Gupta, SDE, office of GMTD, Hisar.
- 14. L.C. Saharan, SDE, office of GMTD, Hisar.
- 15. Parveen Saini, SDE (Mobile) office of G.M. (Mobile) Ambala.
- 16. Mahaveer Parsad, SDE, office of GMTD, Sonepat.
- 17. Narender Kumar, SDE, office of GMTD, Faridabad.
- 18. Ishwar Singh, SDE, office of GMTD, Karnal.
- 19. Krishan Kumar, SDE, office of GMTD, Hisar.
- 20. Mukesh Kumar, SDE, office of GMTD, Rohtak.
- 21. Rajesh Kumar, SDE, office of GMTD, Hisar.
- 22. Janak Raj, AD (Vig.) office of CGMT, Ambala.
- 23. Rajender Kumar Dhingra, SDE, office of GMTD, Hisar.
- 24. Jatinder Sehgal, SDE, office of GMTD, Karnal.
- 25. Rajesh Kumar, SDE, office of GMTD, Hisar.
- 26. Ajay Bhargava, SDE, office of GMTD, Rewari.
- 27. Jitender Kumar, SDE, office of GMTD, Karnal.
- 28. Rajpal Singh, SDE, office of GMTD, Hisar.
- 29. Mohan Lal Gaur, SDE, office of GMTD, Faridabad.
- 30. Kamal Kumar, SDE, office of GMTD.
- 31. Pardeep Kumar, SDE, office of GMTD, Jind.
- 32. Rajni Nagpal, SDE, office of GMTD, Rohtak.

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- 33. Paramjit Kaur, SDE, office of GMTD, Gurgaon.
- 34. Yash Pal, SDE, office of GMTD, Gurgaon.

By: Mr. Harish Kinra, Advocate.

## Respondents

## (2) T-85-HR-2009 (CWP No.13955 of 2007)

- Pawan Kumar Jindal son of Gian Chand Jindal, Sub Divisional Engineer (Transmission 1), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., office of G.M.T.D., Ambala, Haryana.
- Vipin Kumar Jain, son of Sh. M.C. Jain, Sub Divisional Engineer (PLG), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. Office of G.M.T.D. Ambala, Haryana.
- 3. Ashok Kumar son of Sh. Hans Raj Sharma, A.D. (P.L.G), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. Office of G.M. (M.S) Ambala Haryana.
- 4. Rakesh Kumar Kalra son of Sh. Niha**Ł**, Chand, Sub Divisional Engineer, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., office of G.M.T.D., Ambala, Haryana.
- 5. Anil Kumar son of Sh. Ram Lal, Sub Divisional Engineer (O/D), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., office of G.M.T.D., Ambala, Haryana.
- Mahesh Kumar Sharma son of Sh. Jai Krishan Pal, Sub Divisional Engineer (OCB-Local), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., office of G.M.T.D., Ambala, Haryana.



- Davinder Singh Negi son of Late Sh. Dayal Chand Negi Sub Divisional Engineer (MKTG), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., office of G.M.T.D., Ambala Haryana.
- 8. Dinesh Puri, son of Sh. Mohinder Jit Lal Puri, Sub Divisional Engineer (Admn.), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., office of G.M.T.D., Ambala Haryana.
- Brij Kishore, son of Late Sh. Ram Chand, Sub Divisional Engineer (Vig), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., Office of G.M.T.D., Ambala, Haryana.
- Bhupinder Singh son of Sh. Assa Singh, A.D.(M.M), office of General manager (MS), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., Ambala, Haryana.
- Prem Sagar Sekri son of Late Sh. Parma Nand Sekhri, Sub Divisional Engineer (O/D), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., office of G.M.T.D., Ambala, Haryana.
- Praveen Kumar son of Sh. Nand Kishor, AD (OPN), Bharat Sanchar
   Nigam Ltd., Office of G.M. (M.S), Ambala, Haryana.

By: Mr. Yogesh Goel, Advocate.

#### Versus

 Union of India through the Secretary, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Department of Telecommunications, 421, Sanchar Bhawan, 20, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001.

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- Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Statesmen House, 148, Barakhamba Road,
   New Delhi, through its chairman-cum-Managing Director
- 3. Chief General Manager, Haryana Telecom Circle, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, 107, The Mall, Ambala Cantt, Haryana.

Respondents

By: Mr. V.K.Sharma, Advocate.

## ORDER (Oral)

## MRS. SHYAMA DOGRA, JM

The questions of facts and law are common as such both the petitions have been taken up for disposal by this common order.

- 2. The applicants, working as Sub Divisional Engineers under the official respondents, are members of Telecom Engineering Services 'Group B'. The question raised in these Applications is as to what would be the mode of fixation of seniority in TES Group 'B' between members of service who are appointed on the basis of seniority vis-à-vis those who enter the service after qualifying the Limited Departmental Competitive Examination (for short LDCE), if the rules are silent on this aspect?
- 3. The recruitment to the post of Sub Divisional Engineer (Telecom) is governed by Sub Divisional Engineer (Telecom) Recruitment Rules, 2002. The post is to be filled in by promotion to the extent of 75% on the basis of seniority-cum-fitness. Junior Telecom Officers (Telecom) with 3 years regular service in the grade are eligible for promotion on seniority-cum-fitness basis. Rest 25% quota is to be filled on the basis of LDCE, from amongst Junior Telecom Officers





(Telecom) who have rendered not less than three years' regular service in the grade. It is, thus, clear that the vacancies are to be filled up under the ratio of 3:1.

4. There is a provision in the recruitment rules which being relevant is reproduced as under :

"in case of non availability of sufficient number of officers for filling up these posts by promotion / by selection in a particular recruitment year, the unfilled vacancies shall be diverted and filled up through Limited Departmental Competitive Examination and vice versa subject to the condition that the quota shall be restored in subsequent recruitment years".

The above provision is the bone of contention between both sides.

- 5. The case of the applicants is that they were promoted as TES Group B / SDE on officiating basis w.e.f. 23.6.1999 onwards. However, they got regular appointment against seniority-cum-fitness quota vide order dated 16.9.2004. The applicants claim that they were appointed within their own quota.
- 6. In the same year 1509 JTOs who had cleared the LDCE were promoted as Sub Divisional Engineers vide order dated 26.5.2004. It is claimed that seniority is to be determined on the basis of actual date of joining. Since the applicants promoted against seniority-cum-fitness quota were already working on the date of promotion of applicants. The respondents conducted a LDCE on

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15.7.2007 and obviously after results are out the incumbents would get appointment against 25% quota and they may get seniority over and above persons who have already become members of the service like applicants. In fact in the seniority list dated 3.4.2007, slots have been kept vacant for incumbents who are yet to be promoted by LDCE.

- 7. Learned counsel for the applicants submitted that once no Rota has been provided by the rules, the same cannot be read into the rules and seniority cannot be fixed as per roster. There being no provision in the rules for fixation of seniority as per slots in the ratio of 3:1, the seniority has to be fixed as per date of joining on the basis of continuous length of service. It has been submitted that official respondents cannot grant promotion/seniority to the incumbents belonging to LDCE quota from a date when they were not even members of service.
- 8. It is submitted that as per instructions dated 25.6.1986 (Annexure P-10 in TA No.85-HR-09) if adequate number of direct recruits are not available in any particular year, the promotees will be bunched together at the bottom of the seniority list below the last position up to which it is possible to determine seniority on the basis of rotation of quota. The unfilled direct recruits quota vacancies would be carried forward and the additional direct recruits selected against the carried forward vacancies of the previous year would be placed enblock below the last of the list on the basis of rotation of the vacancies of the said year. On the basis of this principle, it is argued that promotion by selection

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on the basis of LDCE is akin to direct recruitment and same principle will follow in such cases also.

- 9. It is argued by learned counsel for the applicants on the basis of judgment in Central Provident fund Commissioner & Another Vs. N. Ravinderan & Others, 1995 Supp. (4) SCC 654, that in case persons are promoted by virtue of seniority cum fitness and others by LDCE against 75% and 25% respectively, then promotion to next higher post is to be made first by satisfying the 75% quota of those entitled to promotion by virtue of seniority-cum-fitness and only then 25% quota is to be filled in. It is further argued that even on the principles laid down in Y.V. Rangiah Vs. J. Sreenivas Rao, AIR 1983 SC 1384, the applicants have to be held to have been appointed against vacancies belonging to earlier thereby entitling them seniority over and above private respondents as Rules of 2002 would not be applicable to them.
- on the decision of Apex Court in **Suraj Parkash Gupta Vs. State of Jammu & Kashmir**, 2000 (3) SCT, 34, to claim that seniority is available from the date vacancy becomes available in a particular quota. Quota rule cannot be presumed to have been broken merely because of the lapse on the part of the government / authorities in not taking appropriate steps to fill up the posts in accordance with the quota rule.
- 11. The private respondents have also contested the case of the applicants on the grounds that these appointments and promotions are made on all India basic and arrost 1010 candidates who are likely to be affected have not



been made party. No publication was effected for their service. Thus, the case is bad for non-joinder of necessary parties. They further contended that seniority position of these persons has attained finality and nobody has challenged it. Therefore, if there plea is allowed, it would just open a pandora's box and would unsettle the position already settled long time back. It is also their contention that they have come through selection on merit basis under 25% quota. The applicants would have participated in that selection process also but they have chosen not to participate, therefore, they cannot challenge it at this belated stage.

- 12. We have heard learned counsel for the parties and perused the material on the file minutely.
- 13. On a careful consideration of the matter and legal proposition of law cited on behalf of contesting parties we find that in the Recruitment Rules, 2002, there is a specific provision that in case of non-availability of sufficient number of officers for filling up such posts by promotion, un-filled vacancies can be diverted and filled through LDCE or vice versa and that the quota shall be restored in subsequent recruitment years.
- 14. First of all we will deal with the Preliminary Objection of respondents that all the persons who are likely to be affected, if claim of applicants is to be allowed, are not party in the proceedings and a such the petitions are not maintainable. In the case of **Dewan Chand & Others** number of persons belonging to LDCE quota have been impleaded as a party-respondents and as such they can defend the interest of the other persons also. In our view they

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have left no stone un-turned in discharging their duty to defend the petitions. Thus, the objection taken by the respondents is rejected. Besides this, notice is found to have been given in various newspapers of Indian Express / New Indian Express published from different places i.e. Mumbai, Vadodra, Chandigarh, Pune, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Kolkata, Lucknow, Chennai, Coimbatore; Madurai, Bangalore; Belgaum; Thiruvananthpuram; Visakhapatnam; Vijaywada; Bhubneshwar, vide Annexure A-1 to A-17 with additional affidavit dated 12/9/2006 field by Shri Diwan Chand, applicant No. 1.

applicants were promoted against seniority-cm-fitness quota vide order dated 16.9.2004 (Annexure P-2), whereas 1509 persons belonging to LDCE were promoted vide order dated 26.5.2004 (Annexure P-6). Apparently, the incumbents appointed through LDCE have been given seniority on the basis of slots mean for particular years ranging from 1996-1997, 1997-98; 1999-2000; 2000-2001 etc. It is specific plea of the applicants on the basis of Annexure P-3, a statement showing that posts under 75% quota of seniority-cum-fitness were available for promotion, that they were promoted within their own quota and after exhausting 75% quota, action to fill up remaining quota of 25% could be taken by department. This plea of availability of posts within their own quota has been taken in para 6 of the petition. The official respondent have admitted the same to be "matter of record" thereby not disputing the stand taken by the applicants.



Now let us discuss the various judgments relied upon on behalf of 16. the applicants. In N.K. Chauhan Vs. State of Gujarat (1997 (1) SCC 308; the words "as far as practicable" on quota rule, have been interpreted. It has been held that such term mean, not interferring with the rational which fulfills the interest of administration, but flexible provision clothing government with powers to meet special situations where the normal process of the government resolution cannot flow smooth. It is a matter of accent and import which affords the final test in the choice between the two parallel interpretation. The State, in tune with the mandate of th rule, must make serious effort to secure hands to fill the number of vacancies from the open market. If it does not succeed, despite honest and serious effort, it qualifies for departure from the rule. As far as possible, the quota system must be kept up and, if not practicable, promotees in the place of direct recruits or direct recruits in the place of promotees may be inducted applying the regular procedure, without suffering the seats to lie indefinitely vacant. In **B.S.Yadav Vs. State of Haryana**, AIR 1981 SC 561, it has been held that rule of rota cannot be read into the rule of quota prescribed by rule 8 of the Punjab Superior Judicial Service rules. In Suraj Parkash Gupta & Others Vs. State of J&K & Others, 2000 (4) SLR, 486, it has been held that since in the Recruitment Rules there is only a quota rule and that no rota rule has been expressly prescribed, rota cannot be brought in because of past practice and there is no rota coupled with quota but that there is only a quota rule. It was held that one can claim seniority only if he has been appointed in his own quota.

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- 16. In **A. Janardhan Vs. Union of India**, AIR 1983 SC 769 it has been held that where the rule provides for recruitment from two sources and simultaneously prescribes quota, unless there is power to relax the rule, any recruitment in excess of quota from either of the sources would be illegal and the excess recruits unless they find their place by adjustment in subsequent years in the quota, would not be members of the service. If the power is conferred on government to make recruitment in relaxation of the rules, any recruitment made contrary to quota rule wold not be invalid unless it is shown that the power of relaxation was exercised malafide.
  - been held that in the absence of any special provision regulating determination seniority, length of continuous service in any particular grade would be the basis for determining seniority in that grade. The compulsion of the rule goes to the extreme extent of making government keep the vacancies in the quota of the direct recruits open and to meet the urgent needs of administration by creating ex-cadre posts or making ad-hoc appointment. However, if a rule prescribes method of fixation of inter-se seniority, the normal practice would not apply and the rule shall prevail, obviously subject to its constitutionality.
    - 18. In <u>Central Provident Fund Commissioner & Another Vs. N.</u>

      Ravindran & Others, 1995 (8) SLR, Page 827, the question was about fixation of seniority of those promoted to the next higher post quota of 75% and 25% prescribed by virtue of seniority-cum-fitness and those promoted by virtue of having passed prescribed examination respectively. It

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was held that both categories have to be treated as belonging to one single class of promotees and promotion, is to be made by first satisfying the 75% quota of those entitled by seniority-cum-fitness rule and then the 25% of those entitled by passing examination to be placed below the said 75%.

- In State of Jammu & Kashmir & Others vs. Javed Iqbal 19. Balwan & Others, 2009 (2) SCT, Page 594, it was held that direct recruits cannot claim seniority from the date prior to their appointments when they were not even borne in the cadre / service. Plea that the direct recruits are entitled to seniority from the date the post fell vacant in the quota for direct appointments, was rejected. In B.S. Mathur & Another Vs. Union of India & Others, JT 2008 (11) Page 173, it was held that if inter-se seniority is finally decided by applying the principle of continuous length of service, it may bring an end to litigation between the officers of two groups. Therefore, the principle of "continuous length of service" should be applied for determined the inter-se seniority of the officers of Delhi Higher Judicial Service appointed up to the year 2006. In case of officers appointed on the same date, whether direct appointees or promotees, the seniority should be fixed on the principles as stated in O.A. Dated 3.7.19896, since it cannot be determined on the basis of length of service alone in case of appointment from two different sources on the same date ( emphasis supplied).
  - 20. In <u>AFHQ/ISOs Sos (DP) Association & Others Vs. Union of</u>

    <u>India & Others</u>, 2008 (2) SCT, Page 98, it was held that direct recruits could

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not claim appointment from the date of vacancy in their quota before their selection. The respondents have also placed reliance on certain judgments to claim that rota quota rule can be followed for determination of seniority.

21. The sum total of the above discussed judgments is that if there is quota provided in the rules for recruitment to by different methods to posts i.e. by way of promotion on seniority-cum-fitness basis and recruitment by way of promotion though Limited Departmental Examination or for that matter direct recruitment, in a particular proportion or quota which in this case happens to be 75:25, and recruitment takes in a single process, then it is practical, possible and permissible to follow the rule of rotation of vacancies for fixation of inter-se seniority of incumbents appointed through both the sources. However, if the selection does no take place in a single process and promotees join their duties after getting promotion but persons under Limited Departmental Examination quota or direct recruitment get selected after few months or years, they cannot be allowed to claim that they should be granted seniority from the date of occurrence or year of vacancy. However, it has been made clear that quota has to be maintained. If promotees category gets appointed in excess of quota, such surplus quota persons are to be adjusted on availability of vacancies their own quota. But if there is relaxation in quota by a conscious decision in terms of the rules and regulations and incumbents are appointed under such relaxed quota, then they would get seniority from the date of their appointment. In the facts of this case we find that the decision in the case of Central Provident Fund Commissioner & Another Vs. N. Ravindran & Others (supra) is applicable.

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In that case also ratio of 75: 25 between promotees one group belonging to seniority-cum-fitness basis and other group belonging to Examination was involved. It was held that both categories have to be treated as belonging to one single class of promotees and promotion is to be made by first satisfying the 75% guota of those entitled by seniority-cum-fitness rule and then the 25% of those entitled by passing examination to be placed below the said 75%. In this case, the applicants have pleaded specifically that the vacancies were available within their own quota of 75% and unless such quota is satisfied, recruitment to 25% quota could not be made. In the present case same situation has arisen. Thus, we are of the view that since applicants were promoted under 75% quota in 2000 whereas persons under 25% quota were promoted after 4 years after qualifying the LDCE, therefore, private respondents cannot claim seniority vis a vis 75% quota promotees. Position would have been different had promotion under 75% and 25% LDCE Examination, been made in one slot in same year. Then, for obvious reason they have to be given seniority according to the ratio if any fixed under relevant rules or instructions as applicable. Since the question of determination of seniority of thousands of employees is involved, the only solution which appeals to the reason is that the seniority may be fixed on the basis of date on which one becomes member of the service particularly when recruitment is not made in one process and not on hypothetical basis, as has been done while issuing impugned seniority lists.

22. Thus, the seniority of the incumbents have to be determined on the dates of their actual joining and not on notional basis by allotment of slots. If the

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recruitment is conducted in a single process and promotions are ordered on the same date or occasion, one can understand case of the respondents. But in this case where the LDCE could not take place, for whatsoever reasons, for a number of years and once it has taken place subsequently, the pass out candidates cannot be given seniority on national basis of year of vacancy, which concept is applicable on in the case of All India Service officers. In any case one thing is more than clear that this a case where the rota rule has been broken down due to delay in making recruitment from both the sources and as such it has to be taken that one would get his seniority only from the date he becomes member of the service. The official respondents have admitted that competitive examination could not be held because the process of absorption of Group B officers including SDE (T) in BSNL was finalized in the year 2004-05 and syllabus for the examination had to be revised / finalized. The vacancies of SDE (T) had to be recalculated retrospectively, as a result of cancellation / abolition of 1966 posts of TES Group B retrospectively and transfer of posts to MTNL. The quota for each category i.e. 75% and 25% i being maintained from 2001-02 onwards.

23. The Respondents have relied upon instructions issued by the Government of India, Department of Personnel and Training issued vide OM dated 3.7.1986. Para 3.2 of which clearly provides that where absorbees are affected against specific quota prescribed in the recruitment rules, the relative seniority of such absorbee's vis-à-vis direct recruits or promotees shall be determined according to the rotation of vacancies which shall be based on the quota reserved for promotion, direct recruitment and promotion respectively in

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the recruitment rules. In this case, a person who has become member of service in 2004 is sought to be placed below persons who qualified an examination on the basis of a syllabus prescribed in 2006, against the vacancy of 1996 or so. This kind of approach is totally unreasonable, unwarranted and illegal. In any case, official respondents would have done well to issue their own instructions for fixation of seniority of incumbents when there is clash of interest amongst thousands of officers and there is huge delay in making selection.

17. In view of the above discussion, both these Original Applications are allowed. Orders/seniority lists impugned in these petitions are quashed and set aside. The respondents are directed to re-draw the seniority of officers of TES Group-B on the basis of dates of joining of incumbents, as discussed above, within a period of six months from the date of receipt of copy of this order. Before undertaking such exercise, respondents may invite objections from the persons likely to be adversely effected before re-drawing seniority as observed herein above. No costs.

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