

# Compassionate appointments must be decided within six months: SC



Making families wait for years is hardly compassionate on the part of the government, it says Government appointments on compassionate grounds to family members of staffers who died in the harness should be made within six months from applying, the Supreme Court has said in a judgment.

A Bench led by Justice M.R. Shah said the very intention behind “compassionate appointments” is to render immediate help to families of dead government employees. Time is of essence. Making these families wait for years is hardly compassionate on the part of the government, it said.

“A family of a deceased employee may be placed in a position of financial hardship upon the untimely death of the employee while in service and the basis or policy is immediacy in rendering of financial assistance to the family of the deceased consequent upon his untimely death,” Justice Shah explained.

The judgment referred to cases in which bereaved families in dire financial straits were made to wait for decades, go through long-winded litigation by the government to make their case for a compassionate appointment. In some cases, authorities would inexplicably, on “frivolous” reasons, refuse even orders of the High Courts to give the job and choose to appeal in the Supreme Court.

The judgment came in a case in which a man, who applied for a junior clerk’s position on compassionate grounds in the Odisha government after the death of his father who was an excise inspector, was made to wait for more than five years even as the case travelled all the way up to the Supreme Court.

“If the object and purpose of appointment on compassionate grounds as envisaged under the relevant policies or the rules have to be achieved then it is just and necessary that such applications are considered well in time and not in a tardy way. We have come across cases where for nearly two decades the controversy regarding the application made for compassionate appointment is not resolved. This consequently leads to the frustration of the very policy of granting compassionate appointment on the death of the employee while in service,” the top court noted.