

ALL INDIA BANK OFFICERS' CONFEDERATION



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Circular No. 2020/12

Date: 31.01.2020

To All Affiliates (Please Circulate)

Dear Comrades,

Let us stand resolute against ill-conceived attempts of management to foil the Two days' Strike call of UFBU

The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella organisation of 9 Officers and Award Staff Unions has given a call of two days' bank strike on 31st January and 1st February, 2020 to begin with – after 22 rounds of inconclusive wage negotiation talks over a period of 32 months - where no concrete agreement has reached except for inadequate percentage increase in 'pay slip component costs' offered by the Indian Banks' Association, representing the management and virtual negation of all other demands such as 5 day banking, merger of special pay with basic pay and increase in load factor and so on.

2. In response to the Strike Notice of the Unions, the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central), an apex organisation in the country responsible for maintaining harmonious industrial relations, convened a conciliation meeting in New Delhi on 27th January, 2020. The proceedings were attended by representatives of IBA and Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance besides the leaders of the constituents of UFBU. Attempts were made by Shri Rajan Verma, CLC to reconcile but in absence of any improvement in IBA's earlier offer held as unacceptable and its conditional willingness to hold further talks only on deferring the strike call, the said conciliation efforts failed. Since the discussions did not yield any positive result, the CLC (C) advised the IBA to hold direct bilateral talks with the Unions before the proposed strike and try to reach solutions.

3. Following the direction from CLC(C) is, the IBA convened one more round of wage negotiation talk on 30th January, 2020. The Negotiating Committee of the IBA was represented by Shri Rajkiran Rai, MD & CEO of Union Bank of India and Chairman of the Committee, while UFBU was represented by leadership of all the 9 Unions. During the discussions, the IBA improved its offer to 13.5%, which was not acceptable to the Unions. Thereafter, the Chairman of State Bank of India and Chairman of IBA, Shri Rajnish Kumar invited the union leaders for further discussion, during the course of which he improved the offer to 15% hike in pay slip components cost. However, he categorically stated that that the core demands of the unions such as 5 day week, merger of special allowance with basic pay, and increase in load factor were 'non-negotiable'.

4. We understand that the bank managements are taking retrograde and punitive measures to foil our strike action. Messages are being sent by the management to individual officers to join duty on the days of strike. Intimations are on stating that Sec 36 AD of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 would be invoked. IBA's letter to the CLC (C) is a total misrepresentation of fact, when it states that it has offered 'total pay out to an employee' being of '16.36% approximate increase in salary' (by way of adding up 'pay slip components cost' earlier offered by it as a component of percentage increase in salary of individual employees, which is nothing but a sheer jugglery of arithmetic), thereby misleading the bankmen as well as the conciliating authority. The notification issued by IBA is deplorable as it intended to mislead the public with a bundle of lies. While they have termed the union leaders as 'irresponsible', it their callous attitude that have compelled us to go for the strike action. The The age-old tactics to divide the agitating employees and officers on the basis of cadre, grade, scales and designations adopted by the Government-IBA combine remind us of the similar unreasonable, anti labour and intolerant attitude shown by them in the past, which could effectively be thwarted by the unified action of the banking trade unions with the active support of central trade unions and lawmakers of the nation.

5. It may be recalled that though Finance Ministry, vide its communiqué dated 12.01.2016 advised all the MD&CEOs / Chairmen of the PSBs as well as the IBA to expedite and conclude the 11th Bipartite Wage Settlement well before November, 2017 and officers' associations and workmen unions also submitted their respective Charter of Demands well before the due date (01.11.2017) and negotiations also commenced on 2nd

May, 2017, no significant progress could be made primarily on account of dilly-dallying attitude of IBA with almost each and every issue of the process. For instance, even after a lapse of one year from the date of commencement of negotiations, IBA offered a mere 2% increase in 'pay slip components cost', which was befittingly rejected by the unions. The regressive approach of IBA was all the more manifested in its repeated refusals to include officers in Scale-IV to VII in the wage negotiation process. It was only due to the unequivocal demand of All India Bank Officers' Confederation that IBA should ensure that all its member banks submit unconditional mandate for facilitating meaningful discussion, and finally all the four officers' organisations taking a considered stand in a meeting held at Bangalore on 25th June, 2019 that on the issue of the mandate, all those organisations would be together, the IBA had to finally relent and agree for the wage negotiation talks with unconditional mandate i.e. covering officers of all Scales.

6. The strike call given under the banner of United Forum of Bank Unions demands a fair, respectable wage revision and improvement in service conditions of the bankmen besides those related to the retirees and pensioners. Comrades, we have nothing against our own institutions (banks) and it is an industry level call for all of us – the entire banking fraternity of the country – of upholding our legitimate and just demands which remained unduly unsettled since 01.11.2017 and also our self esteem and basic right to form association / trade unions – guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (c) of the Indian Constitution. Therefore, the ill-conceived attempts of a section of the management and IBA to foil the well notified strike action of UFBU by way of issuance of coercive letters to bankmen, spreading of unauthentic social media messages / posts purportedly issued by banking union leaders (even when talks were under way on 30th January afternoon) and subsequent publication of misleading advertisements to provoke common public against the legitimate agitation of bank employees speaks not only of their intolerant and authoritarian attitude but also the total disregard to the Supreme Law of the nation – the Constitution of India.

7. Comrades, time has come to show our strength and unity. Let all of us irrespective of cadre, designation, job role, number of years of service etc. be overwhelmingly present at strike day demonstration programme being held at each and every centre, district, city and show to the Government and IBA our anguish and resoluteness for clinching our justified and long cherished demands. Let us effectively counter the 'Arrogance of Power' by the 'Strength of Unity'.

We will fight, we will fight! Till we succeed, we will fight!!
All for one and one for all.

With revolutionary greetings,

Comradely yours,



(Soumya Datta)
General Secretary

It is essential that there should be organization of **labor**.

This is an era of organization.

Capital organizes and therefore **labor** must **organize**.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, Former US President
