

ALL INDIA BANK OFFICERS' CONFEDERATION

(Registered under the Trade Unions Act 1926, Registration No.3427/Delhi)
6th Floor, E-Block, Samriddhi Bhavan, 1, Strand Road, Kolkata -700 001
c/o State Bank of India Officers' Association (Bengal Circle)
Phone: 2210-1234, Fax: (033) 2210-2210



e-mail: aiboc.sectt@gmail.com
soumyadatta.aiboc@gmail.com
website: www.aiboc.org
[@aiboc_in](https://www.aiboc.org)

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To All Affiliates (Please Circulate)

International Workers' Day: Challenges Ahead

The 8-hour workday movement which directly gave birth to the historic May Day may be traced to the general movement of the workers across the United States a hundred and thirty five years ago with a general strike and a march with the slogan: "Eight-hour day with no cut in pay". The militancy of this working class revolt, ruthless state repression and execution of the Haymarket martyrs of Chicago created history and led to its observance as the **International Workers' Day** from 1890. Since then, 1st May has been celebrated across the world in solidarity and inspiration for the global struggle against exploitation of labour by capital and for the freedom and dignity of the working class.

Comrades, May Day of 2021 comes at a time when our country is combating the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic that has wreaked havoc. The entire healthcare facilities are under extreme duress, as the daily count of infected people is nearing 4 lakh. The dearth of beds at hospitals, oxygen, medicines has taken away innumerable precious lives. The bizarre visuals of people dying on the streets, bodies piling at mass crematoriums and burial grounds have evoked angst and resentment across the nation. Though the vaccination drive has started, and announcement for vaccination of all adults has been made by the Government, shortage of vials and lack of proper distribution has left the people at large standing in long queues for registering their names for either the first or the second dose with huge anxiety and distress. Many areas – particularly rural and semi-urban ones are yet to get adequate supply of vaccine doses – even to start up the drive for citizenry above 45 years.

The trade union movement needs to gear up in order to meet the immediate challenges thrown up by this unprecedented and multi-dimensional crisis by cooperating with all efforts from all corners to contain and combat the spread of the deadly virus; stand in solidarity with the frontline workers providing medical and essential services which include the bank employees and officers, who have lately earned the sobriquet of 'Frontline Covid Warriors' to provide immediate relief to the sick and working class families and zealously defend the hard won labour rights against any governmental attempts to trample upon them. The working class movement also needs to get prepared for intense struggles to transform the decadent neoliberal order, austerity regimes, financial liberalisation and privatisation programmes as announced on the budget day which can only deepen this crisis, causing unbearable miseries for the working class. This should be one of the foremost resolutions on this **International Workers' Day**.

The 'financial army' of the nation has displayed admirable grit and gumption in extending uninterrupted banking and ATM services for customers during the previous year when the country had declared a lockdown. Even during the present crisis of second wave of the Pandemic, our members are providing yeoman services. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, nearly a thousand bankers have laid down their lives in the line of duty having succumbed to the virus, while several others, being seriously affected, battling for survival across the length and breadth of the country.

AIBOC strongly urges upon Hon'ble Prime Minister and Hon'ble Union Finance Minister to shelve the retrograde decision to privatise two public sector banks and instead bolster the public sector as it has been established yet again that during any crisis only the public sector can serve the citizens. Any decision to privatise public sector banks will be countered tooth and nail.

Despite being one of the founder members of International Labor Organisation (ILO), India, the largest democracy of the world, is yet to ratify some of the basic tenets of the trade union rights viz. ILO Conventions No. 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise) and No. 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention). The Government is going ahead to usher in changes in the labour laws, which are detrimental for the working class and skewed in favour of the employers.

The prevailing circumstances in the country do not permit us to hold rallies, symposia, workshops, meetings, and congregations etc. to celebrate May Day of this year in a befitting manner, as we were doing till 2019. Notwithstanding the same, we call upon all our Affiliates, State and District Units to take up all possible social causes and to demonstrate that we care for the society and well being of the entire working class and their families. Let us take another oath of extending helping hand to the Corona affected people of the society to whatever extent possible.

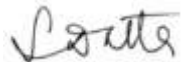
Comrades, as long as the struggle of the working class against the ruling class continues, as long as all demands remain unfulfilled, May Day will continue to be the just expression of our legitimate demands. The Confederation will once again vouch to be one of the principal torch bearers of the movement for protecting the rights earned by the leaders of the yester years after protracted struggle and furthering the causes of the working class.

STAY SAFE, STAY HEALTHY!

BANK BACHAO, DESH BACHAO!

LONG LIVE WORKING CLASS SOLIDARITY!

With revolutionary greetings,



(Soumya Datta)
General Secretary
