OFFICERS' CAUSE

OCTOBER - 2026

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UNION IS STRENGTH

ACCESSIBILITY BARRIERS IN THE SPARK LEARNING PORTAL FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED EMPLOYEES

Text of AIBOF Letter No. 6810/23/26,Dated: 09/10/2026, Addressed to The Deputy Managing Director (HR) & CDO,State Bank of India, Corporate Centre, Mumbai – 400021.

This is to bring to your kind information that we have been receiving representations from a section of our members who face accessibility barriers while undertaking mandatory learning modules and assessments on the SPARK Learning Portal.

As we understand, under the provisions applicable to Mandatory Learning for FY-2026-27, employees classified as ***"Persons with Disabilities"*** under Visually Impaired category are not exempted from Role-Based Certification, specified e-lessons and Coursera courses for the purpose of calculating the Mandatory Learning score.

Visually impaired employees basically depend upon screen readers such as JAWS and keyboard-only navigation to access digital platforms. At present, several features of the SPARK Learning Portal cannot be accessed or operated independently through these assistive technologies causing insurmountable hitches for them for an effective and timely completion of their mandatory learning efforts.

The difficulties reported by employees include:

1. Course content cannot always be navigated effectively using only the keyboard.
2. Buttons, links, headings, form fields, menus, tables, icons and other interactive controls are frequently unlabelled or inadequately identified by screen readers.
3. The focus order is sometimes illogical or unclear, and the position of the keyboard focus is not always conveyed to the user.
4. Certain quizzes, assessments, drag-and-drop exercises and other interactive activities cannot be completed independently through JAWS or keyboard commands.
5. Assessment timers, alerts, error messages, instructions, submission confirmations and feedback are not consistently announced by the screen reader.
6. Images, charts, diagrams, videos, reference documents and other visual materials are not always accompanied by accessible text alternatives, transcripts, audio descriptions or screen-reader-compatible versions.
7. Employees often encounter keyboard traps or controls that require the use of a mouse.

These barriers substantially increase the time required to study course material and complete assessments.

Consequently, such employees are placed on an unequal landscape causing an impediment to their effort for completion of their mandatory courses cascading a direct impact in their career prospects. Their performance on account of glitches in the system is greatly being obstructed on account of their inability to overcome an inaccessible interface rather than by their knowledge or understanding of the subject. A mandatory assessment thus fails the test of being equitable when one group of employees are made to first overcome technological barriers and then perform which is not the case for the others. The absence of equal and independent access, along with the non-provision of appropriate and reasonable accommodation thus appears to be discorded with the principles and obligations of their Rights conferred in Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act) and in other way demonstrative of an act of denial to their legitimate right to equality and equity.

In view of the difficulties faced by this set of officers, we request that, till such time the SPARK Learning Portal, its course content and its assessment processes are made fully accessible and independently usable; the visually impaired employees may kindly be exempted from the applicable mandatory learning modules and assessment frameworks.

We further propose for a dedicated orientation; demonstration and practice sessions be conducted for visually impaired employees before mandatory modules and assessments are assigned, so as to make them better equipped with the system and to facilitate ease of execution.

This request may please not to be construed as for any special privilege or relaxation of learning standards. It is a sincere request for equal access, reasonable accommodation and a fair assessment environment in which visually impaired employees can demonstrate their knowledge without being disadvantaged by an inaccessible technological interface.

We therefore request your kind authority to consider this representation favourably, initiate a time-bound accessibility remediation programme and grant the requested interim exemption to the particular set of officers, until the necessary solutions are fully implemented.

We shall be grateful for an early and favourable response.■

6TH OCTOBER 2026 – 42ND FOUNDATION DAY OF AIBOC
HONOURING OUR LEGACY, RENEWING OUR RESOLVE, REIGNITING OUR STRUGGLE

Text of AIBOC Circular No. 2026/77, dated 05.10.2026.

October 6, 2026, marks a significant date in the history of AIBOC as we celebrate 41 years of our proud existence and step into our 42nd Foundation Day. This occasion affords us the opportunity to reflect on our long journey of struggle, sacrifice, and unity.

Our journey began on October 6, 1985, at FICCI Hall in New Delhi, after eleven affiliate-level officers' organizations, representing approximately 122,000 officers, compelled the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) to sign a wage settlement on September 24, 1985. This event created unprecedented development in the history of bilateralism and was a direct result of officers' community deep commitment to organizational values. As we celebrate our 42nd Foundation Day, we should also acknowledge the consolidation that took place within the officers' movement, particularly following industrial actions and strikes at the State Bank of India, Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, and Central Bank of India, leading to the formation of AICOBOO. AIBOC's emergence from AICOBOO signifies the desire for inner democracy within the organization and an unwavering commitment to uphold officers' dignity.

Throughout decades of transformation in the Indian banking sector, AIBOC, maintaining its apolitical character, has led the charge to protect public sector banking, safeguard the interests of

officers, and uphold the broader social responsibility of our banking system. Our struggles for fair wages, improved service conditions, social security, and professional dignity have always been intertwined with the defense of the historic achievements of bank nationalization. We have continuously challenged policies that prioritize private profit over public interest and championed the cause of an inclusive, accountable, and people-oriented banking system.

However, today, we face unprecedented challenges in the banking sector. The aggressive push for privatization, relentless pressure for profitability, increased reliance on technology without proper safeguards, and the erosion of work-life balance are all redefining the relationship between banks and their employees. The relentless drive for targets, mounting workloads, and managerial insensitivity are placing immense pressure on officers. The tragic loss of our colleagues under such circumstances must awaken the conscience of the banking establishment and strengthen our resolve to resist all forms of exploitation and institutional indifference.

As we prepare for the next phase of collective action, every unit, every state organization, and every individual member must be ready for the challenges ahead. Organizational discipline must be complemented by ideological clarity, and collective strength must be bolstered through active participation at all levels. Our movement cannot afford complacency or the illusion that hard-won rights will remain secure without constant vigilance. We must strengthen our grassroots structures, enhance communication with our members, and ensure that every officer's voice is heard in our collective decisions and actions.

On this Foundation Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to carry forward the glorious legacy of our organization with renewed determination. May the sacrifices of our predecessors inspire us, the struggles of our comrades strengthen us, and the aspirations of future generations guide us. AIBOC must remain an unwavering defender of officers' rights, a steadfast champion of public sector banking, and a formidable voice against injustice and exploitation. Our heritage is our strength, our unity is our weapon, and our struggle is our promise to the future.

We request all state units to hoist AIBOC's flag and organise programs like previous years on this special day to make it memorable.■

Long live AIBOC! Long live workers' solidarity!

UNILATERAL ENLARGEMENT OF AGREED EXEMPTIONS FROM STRIKE – DEMAND TO KEEP IBA COMMUNICATION DATED 23.09.2026 IN ABEYANCE

Text of AIBOC Circular No. 2026/67, dated 23.09.2026, reproduce the text of UFBU letter no. UFBU/2026/LTR-5 dated 23.09.2026 addressed to the Chief Executive, Indian Bank Association.

We invite your attention to IBA Letter No. HR&IR/MBR/2026-27/3581 dated 23.09.2026, addressed to the Chairman, State Bank of India, MDs & CEOs of Public Sector Banks and IDBI Bank Ltd., enclosing a purported common list of "Sensitive Installations" in connection with the strike call given by UFBU and other Unions.

UFBU places on record its **strong objection and protest against this unilateral enlargement of the exemptions mutually agreed under the Bipartite Settlement and Joint Note.**

The communication issued by IBA travels substantially beyond the language, scope and intent of the negotiated provisions and seeks, through an administrative exercise undertaken exclusively amongst the managements of Banks, to enlarge the categories of officers and employees who would stand excluded from participation in industrial action.

This **is neither acceptable nor permissible within the framework of bilateral industrial relations.**

IBA's own communication reproduces the relevant provisions.

Clause 16 of the 5th Joint Note refers to:

Officers manning hubs/switch centres, disaster recovery centres or similar sensitive installations requiring round-the-clock maintenance/surveillance and Security Officers required to provide round-the-clock maintenance/surveillance.

Similarly, Clause 37(i) of the 8th Bipartite Settlement refers to watch and ward staff and employees manning installations which require round-the-clock maintenance and surveillance.

Thus, the agreed exemption is **specific, conditional and installation-oriented.** It is not an exemption based merely upon:

- ✦ importance of a business function;
- ✦ nomenclature of a department;
- ✦ administrative convenience;
- ✦ the fact that a function relates to Government business;
- ✦ centralisation of a particular activity; or
- ✦ a unilateral declaration by a Bank or by IBA

that a particular department is "sensitive".

The essential condition appearing in the negotiated provisions is that the concerned personnel must **be manning an installation of the nature contemplated in the settlement which requires round-the-clock maintenance/surveillance.**

UFBU considers it necessary to state this in unambiguous terms **neither the 5th Joint Note nor the 8th Bipartite Settlement, as reproduced in IBA's own communication, provides any blanket exemption to:**

- ➔ Security and surveillance;
- ➔ Data Centres and Disaster Recovery Centres;
- ➔ Payment, Settlement and Remittance Hubs;
- ➔ ATM Operations and Switch Centres;
- ➔ Currency Chests and Cash Processing Centres;
- ➔ Treasury Operations and SWIFT Cells;
- ➔ Cyber Security Operations Centres;
- ➔ Clearing Processing Centres;
- ➔ Digital/Alternate Delivery Channel Operations;
- ➔ Fraud Risk Management and I4C Cells;
- ➔ Network Operations Centres;
- ➔ Centralised Pension Processing Cells;
- ➔ Contact Centres;
- ➔ Complaint Management Systems;
- ➔ Centralised Back Offices;
- ➔ Call Centres; and
- ➔ Government Business and PFMS Cells; or

all officers/employees merely because they are posted in any department which IBA now chooses to describe as sensitive.

The above functions are not named as blanket exemptions in the mutually agreed provisions.

Some particular installation or particular personnel within such functions may fall within the agreed exemption **only where the factual requirements of the negotiated clause are actually satisfied,** namely, where they are required to man a qualifying sensitive installation requiring round-the-clock maintenance/surveillance.

The exemption attaches to the qualifying installation and the personnel indispensable for maintaining it round the clock; it does not attach indiscriminately to the entire department, office, vertical or workforce.

However, the annexure circulated by IBA now identifies as many as 17 broad categories, including Centralised Pension Processing Cells, Contact Centres, Complaint Management Systems, Centralised Back Offices and Government Business & PFMS Cells, apart from several other functions.

Several of these descriptions are not "installations" in the limited sense contemplated by the mutually agreed clauses but are broad business, processing, administrative or customer- service functions.

More importantly, IBA's communication records that this expanded list was arrived at following meetings amongst MDs/CEOs and thereafter Executive Directors/HR functionaries of Banks.

UFBU was neither consulted nor was any agreement reached with the Unions/Associations for such enlargement.

An internal meeting amongst Bank managements cannot amend a Bipartite Settlement or Joint Note. Nor can one party to a negotiated settlement subsequently enlarge the agreed exemption by issuing its own interpretation and then require the

other party to abide by that enlarged interpretation. IBA must appreciate the serious implications of the course now adopted.

The exemptions referred to in the Joint Note and Bipartite Settlement are themselves products of bilateral understanding and mutual accommodation. If one party reserves to itself the right to reinterpret, enlarge and alter such agreed provisions whenever industrial action is announced, it strikes at the very foundation of bilateralism.

UFBU cannot be expected to remain bound by concessions and exemptions voluntarily agreed in a bilateral framework while and when IBA simultaneously seeks to expand those concessions unilaterally and without negotiation.

In these circumstances, **UFBU is also seriously contemplating issuance of appropriate notice for termination of all such agreed provisions relating to exemptions from industrial action contained in the Bipartite Settlement/Joint Note,** in accordance with applicable law and procedure.

If mutually negotiated exemptions are to be treated by IBA as open-ended provisions capable of unilateral expansion by management, UFBU will necessarily have to reconsider whether such agreed exemptions should continue to remain operative at all.

This situation has been created entirely by IBA's attempt to travel beyond what was bilaterally settled. **UFBU therefore calls upon IBA to immediately keep its Letter No. HR&IR/MBR/2026-27/3581 dated 23.09.2026 and the expanded list annexed** thereto in abeyance and advise all member Banks accordingly.

IBA should further clarify forthwith that:

1. the exemption shall remain strictly confined to the scope of Clause 16 of the 5th Joint Note and **Clause 37(i) of the 8th Bipartite Settlement;**

2. no entire department, office, branch, vertical or category of employees/officers can be declared exempt merely because of its nomenclature or inclusion in IBA's list;

3. only personnel who are actually required to man genuine qualifying sensitive installations requiring round-the-clock maintenance/surveillance can come within the agreed exemption;

4. Banks shall not give an enlarged interpretation to the expressions contained in the settlements;

5. any proposal for addition of a new category, function or installation must first be discussed with UFBU and can become operative only upon bilateral agreement; and

6. until such bilateral agreement is reached, no category beyond what is already expressly covered by the existing negotiated provisions shall be treated as exempt.

UFBU wishes to place IBA on clear notice that the matter is of **serious industrial-relations consequence.**

If the communication dated 23.09.2026 and the enlarged list are not immediately withdrawn or kept in abeyance, UFBU shall be constrained to consider appropriate industrial action, apart from all other organisational and legal measures available to it.

Any consequent industrial unrest arising from the unilateral alteration of settled conditions will be avoidable if IBA restores the position strictly to what was mutually agreed.

UFBU therefore expects IBA to intervene without delay and issue a corrective communication to all member Banks **before the commencement of the proposed industrial action,** confirming that the exemptions shall remain confined strictly to the mutually agreed provisions.

We reiterate:

What has been settled bilaterally cannot be enlarged unilaterally.

UFBU shall honour what it has agreed to. IBA must equally remain confined to what it has agreed to.

If IBA seeks to go beyond the settlement, UFBU necessarily reserves its right to **reconsider the continuation of the very exemptions which were extended through bilateral understanding.**

We expect your immediate corrective intervention.■

Intimidatory letters served selectively on SMGS-IV & V officers in connection with the UFBU strike notified for 28–30 September 2026, contrary to the advice of the Conciliation Officer recorded in F. No. 21(05)/2026-IR dated 22.01.2026. Demand for immediate withdrawal.

Text of AISBOF Letter No. 6466/22/2026, Dated: 25.09.2026, Addressed to The Deputy Managing Director (HR) & CDO, State Bank of India,Corporate Centre,Mumbai – 400 021.

It has come to our notice that a standard format letter titled "Letter to be served to all SMGS IV & V Officials", headed "Notice of Strike by United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU)", is being served on officers in SMGS-IV and SMGS-V under the signature of Branch/Department Heads across the country. A copy is enclosed.

2. The letter:

a. is addressed exclusively to officers of a particular cadre, namely SMGS-IV and V;

b. invokes Section 36AD of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 against participation in organisational action;

c. states in advance that participation "will entail serious consequences including termination of service", besides loss of emoluments and an entry in service records; and

d. declares the addressees to be "part of the Senior Management" and directs them to attend office on the strike dates.

3. This Bank was a party to the conciliation proceedings held on 22.01.2026 before the Dy. Chief Labour Commissioner (Central)-cum-Conciliation Officer, and was represented there at the level of General Manager, who signed the minutes (F. No. 21(05)/2026-IR). In those proceedings, the Conciliation Officer specifically advised bank managements as follows:

"…every employee/officer has the lawful right to form associations and participate in legitimate trade union activities as enshrined in the Constitution of India, including duly notified organisational action. Any intimidatory or coercive communication, particularly those selectively addressed to SMGS-IV/SMGS-V or issued as blanket deterrents and may amount to impermissible interference with trade union rights and may attract action u/s 25(U) of the ID Act, 1947. Accordingly, all such letters/instructions already issued must be kept in abeyance and withdrawn/rescinded forthwith in order to avoid any legal complicacies."

The minutes further record that managements ***"may, at best, issue a general appeal to all employees/ officers" but "must not issue threats, blanket prohibitions, or cadre-based intimidations that undermine lawful collective action."***

4. The impugned letter is exactly the kind of communication the Conciliation Officer cautioned against. It is selective, since it targets only SMGS-IV/V. It is coercive, since it threatens termination. And it is a blanket deterrent, since it pre-emptively prohibits participation by an entire cadre. Its issue eight months after the Bank's own representative signed those minutes is a serious disregard of the statutory conciliation machinery. It cannot be described as an oversight, but deliberate.

5. The minutes also record UFBU's submission that some banks were mis-quoting Section 36AD of the Banking Regulation Act. They further record that the Government of India assured Parliament in 1968 that the provision would not be invoked against legitimate trade union activity, and accordingly advised the Reserve Bank of India. That submission was not controverted by the representatives of DFS or IBA present. Section 36AD is a penal provision. It does not empower a Branch or Department Head to determine that an officer has contravened it, still less to announce the penalty in advance. Invoking it in a letter to individual officers can only be intended to intimidate and coerced.

6. The letter first says participation "may be viewed" as non-compliance, and in the next sentence declares that it "will entail" termination of service. This pre-judges the outcome of any disciplinary

process before any act has occurred, contrary to the principles of natural justice and to the procedure prescribed in the SBI Officers' Service Rules. It is also issued under the signature of Branch/ Department Heads, who are not, to our understanding, the Disciplinary Authority for officers in SMGS-IV and V.

7. An officer's grade does not take away his or her right to be a member of, and to take part in the duly notified programmes of the association to which he or she belongs. SMGS-IV and V officers are members of our affiliated associations, which the Bank itself recognises. Attaching a "Senior Management" label to a cadre, and using it to compel attendance on the strike dates, is the "cadre-based intimidation" that the Conciliation Officer specifically disapproved.

8. The Conciliation Officer's advice referred to Sections 25T/25U of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. The corresponding provisions now stand in Section 84 of the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, read with Part I of the Second Schedule. That Schedule lists as unfair labour practices by an employer: interfering with, restraining or coercing persons in the exercise of their right to organise and to engage in concerted activities (Item 1), and interfering with any Trade Union (Item 2). Penal consequences follow under Section 86 of the Code. The impugned letter interferes with the members of our affiliates and with the associations themselves.

9. To avoid any misunderstanding, we clarify that we take an exception to such communication and register our objection to the selective, coercive and threatening content of this letter.

10. We therefore call upon the Bank to:

(i) withdraw and rescind the impugned letter forthwith, and in any case before 28.09.2026, by a written communication sent through the same channels to every officer on whom it was served;

(ii) instruct all controllers that no disciplinary action, adverse entry in service records or other adverse consequence shall be initiated or recorded on the basis of that letter;

(iii) confine any further communication on the proposed strike to a general appeal addressed to all employees and officers, in line with the Conciliation Officer's advice.

11. If the letter is not withdrawn, we will be constrained to report this non-compliance to the Office of the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) for appropriate action under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, and to pursue such other remedies as may be available, entirely at the Bank's risk as to cost and consequences.

We trust the Bank will act promptly and preserve the atmosphere of good faith that the conciliation process is meant to foster.■

UFBU STRIKE, 28–30 SEPTEMBER 2026 — LETTERS SERVED ON SMGS-IV & V OFFICERS: THE LAW, THE RECORD AND OUR RESPONSE

1. Branch/Department Heads/Controllers are serving a standard letter on officers in SMGS-IV and V, describing them as "Senior Management", invoking Section 36AD of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and warning that participation in the strike from 28–30 September 2026 "may be viewed as non-compliance with the applicable statutory provisions". The letter further threatens ***termination of service,*** loss of emoluments and adverse entries in service records. This is clearly intended to deter participation in the strike and divide officers on the basis of cadre. ***Members need not be intimidated.*** The legal position and the record are set out below.

2. The reliance placed on Section 36AD does not support the suggestion that participation in a lawful strike is itself prohibited, as the provision begins with the words "No person shall" and deals only with three specific acts: (a) obstructing any person from lawfully entering or leaving a bank office or carrying on business therein; (b) holding, within the bank premises, a demonstration that is violent or prevents normal business; and (c) acting in a manner that undermines depositors' confidence. The provision applies to every person alike and cannot be selectively invoked against SMGS officers. It also penalises only a contravention committed "without any reasonable excuse". A peaceful and duly notified

strike on genuine demands, following the conciliation process, does not fall within these prohibited acts.

3. The Parliamentary record also makes the position clear, as the Committee on Petitions of the 4th Lok Sabha, in its 6th Report, para 3.53, recommended that while applying Section 36AD, "genuine trade union activities do not receive any set back and also the bank employees are not harassed in any manner." The Government accepted this recommendation on 12.03.1970. Thereafter, on 24.03.1970, the then Law Minister informed the House that RBI had been advised to write to banks not to invoke Section 36AD in such circumstances. The then Finance Minister, Shri K.C. Pant, also informed the Rajya Sabha that the section "does not prohibit lawful strikes and other legitimate and peaceful methods of ventilating grievances". Invocation of Section 36AD against participation in a lawful strike is therefore contrary to the assurance placed before Parliament.

4. The same issue had already arisen before the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) during the conciliation proceedings under F. No. 21(05)/2026-IR held on 22.01.2026, in which SBI was represented, when UFBU raised similar communications addressed to SMGS-IV/V officers. The Conciliation Officer advised bank managements that every employee/officer has the lawful right to form associations and participate in legitimate trade union activities, **including duly notified organisational action;** that intimidatory or coercive communications, **particularly those selectively addressed to SMGS-IV/SMGS-V officers** or issued as blanket deterrents, may amount to impermissible interference with trade union rights and may attract action under Section 25(U) of the ID Act, 1947; and that such letters **must be kept in abeyance and withdrawn/rescinded forthwith.** The present communication substantially repeats what the CLC(C) had already advised the banks not to do.

5. The legal position is further relevant in the context of AIBOC having approached the Hon'ble Delhi High Court in W.P.(C) 1052/2026 against communications issued by Public Sector Banks threatening officers with adverse consequences for participation in the strike. **Importantly, the Hon'ble Court expressly granted liberty to AIBOC to initiate appropriate legal proceedings to challenge any consequences that may arise from such communications.**

6. The attempt to separate SMGS-IV and V officers from the Association and its programmes must also be viewed in the context of the Fundamental Right to form associations under Article 19(1)(c) of the Constitution. No officer, irrespective of scale, can be directed to dissociate from the Association or its legitimate programmes. SMGS-IV and V officers are members of our affiliates, and their pay and service conditions are also settled through the same industry-level collective bargaining framework. Merely describing them as "Senior Management" in a letter does not extinguish their constitutional right of association. The threat of termination for participation in a peaceful and duly notified strike is disproportionate and coercive, and any such action will be resisted by the Federation at every appropriate forum.

7. In these circumstances, members should participate in the strike and all programmes as per the UFBU/AIBOC call **peacefully and with complete discipline,** while remaining strictly within the limits of Section 36AD by not obstructing anyone from entering or working, not holding any demonstration inside bank premises that disrupts normal business, and not making any statement that could undermine depositors' confidence. If such a letter is served, it should be acknowledged only by writing **"Received under protest",** with date and signature, and no individual reply, undertaking or assurance should be furnished. A scanned copy of the letter, along with the name and designation of the authority serving it, should immediately be sent to the Circle Association for taking up the matter with the Bank's management and the CLC(C). Any further threat, whether oral or written, should also be reported to the Circle Association on the same day.

8. The Federation is accordingly taking up the matter with the Bank's management and demanding immediate withdrawal of these letters in line with the advice of the CLC(C) dated 22.01.2026. Any coercive, punitive or retaliatory action against members will also be placed before the CLC(C) and other appropriate forums.

Comrades, the service conditions enjoyed by officers today, from Scale I to the executive cadre, are the result of decades of collective struggle. We therefore appeal to our senior colleagues in SMGS-IV and V to stand firmly with the Federation and with the collective call. Our unity is our strength. Let us remain united and ensure the total success of the strike.■

UFBU STRIKE DEFERRED — UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED - A FORWARD MOVEMENT ON FIVE-DAY BANKING, PLI AND RESIDUAL ISSUES – CONGRATULATIONS

Text of AIBOC Circular No. 2026/71, dated 27.09.2026, reproduced the text of UFBU circular no. 2026/33 dated 27.09.2026.

The United Forum of Bank Unions had given the call for a three-day strike on 28th, 29th & 30th September 2026, followed by an indefinite strike from 26th October, on four clear demands — implementation of the agreed Five-Day Banking, keeping the unilateral PLI scheme in abeyance, bilateral modification of the PLI framework, and settlement of the long-pending residual issues.

The struggle and unprecedented mobilisation of bank employees and officers across the country have now resulted in important and tangible developments. After considering the progress achieved and the commitments emerging from the discussions, UFBU has decided to defer the proposed agitational programmes and strike actions. The decision is a deferment in the light of positive developments; it is not an abandonment of our demands.

On Five-Day Banking, there has been a movement forward. Our demand is not new. IBA had already recommended to the Government the declaration of all Saturdays as holidays, and the Settlement/ Joint Note dated 8 March 2024 recorded that the consequential change in working hours would become effective after approval of the Government and necessary clearances. The issue had nevertheless remained pending for more than two years, compelling UFBU to intensify its agitation.

The proposed MoU now provides for the **immediate constitution of a high-level committee of IBA and UFBU** specifically on the issue of declaring the remaining Saturdays as holidays. Importantly, the committee is mandated to examine all possible alternatives, engage with all stakeholders and work out a solution at the earliest. This is an important development. It needs to be understood that the question of Five-Day Banking has moved beyond a general assurance of "consideration". It is now proposed to be taken forward through a defined institutional mechanism involving UFBU, IBA and other stakeholders. The goal remains unchanged: Five-Day Banking must become a reality for the banking industry at the earliest. We are moving towards that.

There has also been substantial movement on the Performance Linked Incentive issue. The Government itself publicly acknowledged through its PIB release that, after considering the concerns raised by the UFBU, it had decided to keep the PLI scheme in abeyance, describing this as fulfilment of one of the two principal demands raised by the Unions. This was a direct consequence of the collective resistance of employees and officers under the banner of UFBU against a unilateral and discriminatory framework.

We remain conscious that subsequently Banks were advised to implement the DFS scheme for Scale IV and above, even while the matter was under dispute and bilateral discussions had commenced. The UFBU strike notice had specifically recorded our objection that the unilateral scheme departed from the bilaterally agreed principle of a uniform, bank-performance-based PLI and created serious disparities within the workforce. It also recorded that IBA had already invited UFBU for bilateral discussions to explore a mutually acceptable revised formula.

The present development is therefore important: IBA has formally agreed that discussions on the PLI scheme for Scale IV and above can commence and that modifications can be proposed to the Government to address the observations of the Unions/Associations.

In these discussions, our endeavour will be to protect the principles of equity, collectivity and relativity across the banking workforce. We have proposed that, while addressing the PLI issue, an appropriate relativity should be worked out for workmen employees and officers up to Scale III with reference to what has been paid to officers in Scale IV and above with effect from the financial year 2024-25. The objective is clear, performance of a Bank is the result of the collective contribution of its workforce, and the incentive framework cannot become an instrument for creating artificial divisions amongst employees and officers.

Another major part of our strike demand related to the residual issues arising out of the 8th March 2024 Settlement and Joint Note. These include improvement in PLI, NPS to OPS, Updation of pension and other improvements, gratuity, medical insurance, recruitment, Special Allowance to be counted for superannuation benefits, North-East incentive, compassionate appointment and uniform cash/business hours, among others. The pending agenda additionally includes important issues such as LTC/LFC monetisation, fitment anomalies, Grid Holidays and regulated working hours for officers, apart from the common pension, PLI, medical and welfare issues.

The proposed MoU now records that these residual issues will be taken up between the parties for expeditious resolution. This converts another important component of our strike charter into a defined bilateral agenda for resolution.

The developments have not come automatically. They have come because lakhs of bank employees and officers stood together, participated in the programmes, sacrificed salary in the earlier strike, and demonstrated that the banking fraternity would not allow commitments solemnly entered into through bilateral settlements to remain indefinitely unimplemented.

Our members should particularly recognise the significance of the present stage. Five-Day Banking has not yet been implemented, but the struggle has compelled the issue to move forward, from an agreement awaiting approval to a proposed high-level Committee for finding the final solution. Similarly, the unilateral PLI framework is now back on the table for negotiation, while the residual issues have been brought into an express framework for expeditious settlement.
Considering these developments in their totality, and with the objective of providing a genuine opportunity for the commitments now recorded to be translated into concrete decisions, UFBU has decided to defer the proposed strike and other agitational programmes. The MoU itself records that the deferment follows the commitments on Five-Day Banking, PLI and residual issues.

27th Sep.2026 Working of Banks:

Since RBI had permitted the Banks o keep them open, we had advised our members to attend the Branches today. In today's discussions, we took up the issue of compensation for the work done on a holiday.

It has been clarified that workmen employees will be paid the OT Wages at double the rate as per Bipartite Settlement, for officers who attended office today, one day wage will be paid.

We thank every member for the extraordinary unity, discipline and determination displayed throughout this movement. **Whatever progress has been achieved belongs to our entire membership.**

At the same time, our vigilance will continue. **We shall closely monitor the implementation of these commitments and, based on the developments and progress achieved within a time-bound process, UFBU will review its organisational action in future. The direction is positive. The opportunity before us is real. Our collective resolve remains firm.**■

FROM UNDERSTANDING TO ACTION UFBU CONTINUES ITS PURSUIT OF FIVE-DAY BANKING, PLI AND RESIDUAL ISSUES

Text of AIBOC Circular No. 2026/72, dated 29.09.2026, reproduced the text of UFBU circular no. 2026/34 dated 29.09.2026.

The understanding reached between the Negotiating Committee of IBA and UFBU on 27th September 2026 marked an important stage in our continuing struggle on Five-Day Banking, Performance Linked Incentive and the long-pending residual issues.

We wish to make it absolutely clear to every member that the struggle has not ended. The commitments secured through our unity and collective action are now being converted into institutional processes and negotiations, and UFBU is continuously pursuing every issue until its logical conclusion.

FIVE-DAY BANKING: THE PROCESS HAS MOVED TO THE NEXT STAGE

During the discussions, we were made to understand that the earlier proposal envisaged in the Settlement/ Joint Note dated **8th March 2024** requires to be reworked. In these circumstances, it has become necessary to continue the engagement at the negotiating table **and pursue the issue actively on day-to-day basis to secure our Goal without loss of time, with the direct participation of UFBU.**

We also like to inform our members that, following the continuous pursuit of the matter by the UFBU leadership after 27th September, the High-Level Committee has been formally constituted today and the first meeting of the committee will be held on 30/09/2026.

The UFBU will now engage in further discussions to explore an alternative and mutually acceptable proposal for the implementation of Five-Day Banking, taking into account the concerns of all stakeholders, including RBI, DFS and other Government Authorities.

However, the constitution of the Committee is **not the final achievement.** It is the mechanism through which the next stage of our struggle will be carried forward. UFBU will allow the Committee a reasonable timeframe to undertake its deliberations and produce a concrete outcome.

Our objective remains Five-Day Banking. There is no dilution whatsoever in this demand. We shall continue to pursue it with the same determination until Five-Day Banking becomes a reality. The UFBU will closely review the progress of these discussions and, based on the developments, decide on its further course of organisational action.

PERFORMANCE LINKED INCENTIVE: FROM UNILATERALISM TO IMMEDIATE BILATERAL NEGOTIATION

On this issue, our struggle first compelled the Government to keep payment of PLI to officers in Scale IV to VIII for FY 2025-26 in abeyance and the issue was proposed to be taken up only during the 13th Bipartite Settlement/10th Joint Note discussions.

More importantly, the discussions which were earlier proposed to be taken up only during the 13th Bipartite Settlement/10th Joint Note negotiations will now commence immediately between IBA and UFBU. Our objective is an inclusive and equitable PLI framework which recognises the collective contribution of employees and officers at every level and eliminates artificial disparities.

UFBU will carry these principles firmly into the forthcoming negotiations and strive to convert the gains already secured into an equitable and inclusive settlement.

RESIDUAL ISSUES — NOW PART OF A DEFINED BILATERAL AGENDA

The residual issues including NPS to OPS, LFC/LTC monetisation, Updation of pension and other improvements, Uniform DA rate on pension, gratuity, regulated working hours for officers, medical insurance, recruitment of clerks and substaff, Leave Bank system, Ex-gratia for pensioners in private banks, Special Allowance to be counted for superannuation benefits, North-East incentive, improvement in Disciplinary Action rules, compassionate appointment and uniform cash/ business hours, and all such issues which remained pending despite repeated discussions and commitments, have now been expressly brought

within a defined bilateral agenda for expeditious resolution. UFBU will pursue their commencement and settlement within the agreed framework and will closely review the progress achieved.

THE STRUGGLE HAS ENTERED INTO A NEW PHASE

Comrades, we are fully conscious that many members had placed great expectations on the proposed strike, particularly on the issue of Five-Day Banking. The disappointment expressed by sections of our memberships after deferment is therefore understandable and is a reflection of their deep commitment to the demand.

At the same time, organisational decisions have to be taken after considering the totality of developments and the possibilities created through collective actions.

The unprecedented mobilisation of employees and officers brought our demands forcefully to the negotiating table. That pressure resulted in:

*** Five-Day Banking entering a formal IBA–UFBU High-Level mechanism;**

*** PLI being brought into bilateral negotiation;**

*** and the residual issues being placed on a defined agenda for expeditious resolution.**

In these circumstances, it was considered appropriate to utilise the formal mechanisms secured through our collective actions and test them through concrete outcomes, while fully retaining our organisational strength and options for the future.

That is precisely what UFBU has done.

UNITY REMAINS OUR GREATEST STRENGTH

Whatever progress has been achieved has been possible only because lakhs of bank employees and officers stood together with discipline, conviction and determination. We reiterate that these developments were the product of the unity, participation and sacrifice of the membership and that future organisational action will be reviewed on the basis of actual progress in implementation.
We therefore call upon all our constituents, affiliates and members to remain united, vigilant and organisationally guided.

Members should rely upon the official communications of UFBU and its constituent organisations and should not be distracted by rumours, misinformation or divisive narratives which can only weaken our collective strength at the crucial stage of negotiations.

Our position is clear.

There is no dilution in our demand for Five-Day Banking.

There is no acceptance of unilateralism in PLI.

There is no abandonment of the residual issues.

The form of our struggle may change according to circumstances; our objectives do not.

UFBU will continuously monitor each of the processes now set in motion. We shall assess progress by concrete results and not by assurances alone, and take such organisational decisions as circumstances may warrant. From agitation to negotiation, and from negotiation to achievement — our collective journey continues. **Let us remain united, confident and resolute.**■

RESIDUAL ISSUES – DISCUSSION TO COMMENCE

Text of AIBOC Circular No. 2026/73, dated 30.09.2026, reproduced the text of UFBU circular no. 2026/36 dated 30.09.2026.

All unions and members are aware that when we signed the 12th Bipartite Settlement/9th Joint Note on 8-3-2024, some of the important issues remained pending and hence it was agreed that these issues and demands would be taken up as Residual Issues and accordingly Minutes were signed with the IBA. But these issues have been remaining unresolved and we have been pursuing the matter with the IBA.

Since recently DFS has suggested to the IBA/Banks to commence the negotiations for the next wage revision process, managements wanted to club these residual issues as part of Charter of Demands for the next wage revision. We had disagreed with its approach and insisted that the Residual Issues

are to be discussed before we submit the Charter of Demands. Hence this was one of the demands of the recent agitation and strike notice.

As we can observe from the Minutes signed on 27-9-2026, IBA has agreed to commence the discussions on the Residual issues.

The following important issues are the Residual Issues as per the Minutes of Discussion signed between IBA.

1.	Improvement in PLI Scheme
2.	- Updation of Pension for past retirees - Provision to be made in the Pension Regulations to provide for periodical updation of pension along with wage revision settlement/s.
3.	Improvements in Pension Scheme
4.	Payment of Gratuity at one month Pay for each year of service without any restrictions.
5.	Option to join the DA linked Defined Benefit Pension Scheme for employees covered by the Defined Contributory Pension Scheme
6.	Extending Ex-gratia to pensioners of private Banks
7.	Introduction of Leave Bank - finalization of the Scheme
8.	Premium of medical Insurance Policy for retirees to be borne by Banks
9.	Improvement in Group Medical Insurance Policy
10.	Adequate recruitments of clerks and sub staff in Banks
11.	DA scheme for all pensioners to be at the uniform Index of 8088 points
12.	Modifications in provisions on Disciplinary Action and Procedure
13.	Inclusion of Special Allowance for superannuation benefits
14.	Allocation of funds to Staff Welfare Fund based on Operating profits of Banks
15.	Transport allowance to be paid to Physically challenged/differently-abled employees as applicable to Government employees.
16.	Modifications in Compassionate Appointment Scheme
17.	Regulated working hours for officers
18.	Uniform Cash hours and business hours
19.	North East Incentive on the lines of RBI/LIC
20.	All contract/temporary employees to be regularized as permanent employees
21.	LTC/LFC Monetization Scheme on the lines of scheme followed by a few Banks in the Industry
22.	Officers in SMGS V who retired during period 1.11.2017 to 31.10.2020 shall be extended the benefit of notional first stagnation increment for the purpose of pension only, who were otherwise eligible, with monetary benefits from 1.4.2024.
23.	Anomaly in fitment on promotion from Clerical to JMGS-I and from one scale to another.
24.	Disturbed area allowance to be extended to Jammu
25.	Grid Holidays

RESIDUAL ISSUES – RELATED TO OFFICERS

Text of AIBOC Circular No. 2026/74, dated 01.10.2026, reproducing UFBU circular no. 36, wherein we have listed the residual issues on which discussion will be commenced with IBA as per the minutes dated 27.09.2026.

We think it appropriate that the residual issues related particularly to officers, which were placed by AIBOC in the Charter of Demand with other officers associations, are to be taken in the discussion, for its resolution should be disclosed separately before the membership for their information.

The issues are :

1. Improvement and Fair PLI Scheme for all
2. Migration from NPS to OPS for officers joined since 2010
3. Regulated working hours for officers
4. Introduction of LTC/LFC Monetization scheme
5. Introduction of Leave Bank – finalisation of the scheme.
6. Modifications in provisions on Disciplinary Action and Procedure
7. North East Incentive on the lines of RBI/LIC, Disturbed area allowance to be extended to Jammu
8. Recruitment in all cadre.
9. Inclusion of Special Allowance for superannuation benefits
10. Updation of Pension for past retirees - Provision to be made in the Pension Regulations to provide for periodical updation of pension along with wage revision settlement/s.
11. Transport allowance to be paid to Physically challenged/differently-abled employees as applicable to Government employees.
12. Modifications in Compassionate Appointment Scheme
13. Extending Ex-gratia to pensioners of private Banks
14. Officers in SMGS V who retired during period 1.11.2017 to 31.10.2020 shall be extended the benefit of notional first stagnation increment for the purpose of pension only, who were otherwise eligible, with monetary benefits from 1.4.2024.
15. Payment of Gratuity at one month Pay for each year of service without any restrictions.
16. Grid Holidays
17. Premium of medical Insurance Policy for retirees to be borne by Banks.

Members are requested to take note of the developments as and when comes during the discussion.■

MEETING OF HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE HELD – 1ST OCTOBER 2026

Text of AIBOC Circular No. 2026/75, dated 01.10.2026, reproduced the text of UFBU circular no. 2026/37 dated 01.10.2026.

All our Unions and members are aware that as agreed in the Minutes signed between IBA and UFBU on 27th September, 2026, the High-level Committee has been constituted on the 29th September. It is a 12 Member Committee formed exclusively to deal with the issue of introduction of 5 Days Banking. A meeting of this Committee was scheduled to be held yesterday, but due to unavoidable reasons, the meeting was rescheduled for today. Accordingly, the meeting was held today noon.

From our side we welcomed the constitution of this Committee immediately as agreed in the Minutes. We welcomed all the members of the Committee and expressed our hope and belief that this Committee would be able to discuss and finalise a clear roadmap for implementation of 5 Days Banking within an earliest possible time-frame.

We pointed out that since the issue involves knowing the concerns of the various stake-holders and addressing them with a view to implement the 5 days banking, a physical meeting should be held at the earliest for a full day so all the connected issues can be discussed and sorted out. Accordingly, it has been decided to hold the meeting shortly.

Further developments will be informed in due course.

GROUP MEDICAL INSURANCE SCHEME/POLICY FOR 2026-27 FOR IN SERVICE EMPLOYEES AND RETIREES

Text of AIBOC Circular No. 2026/76, dated 02.10.2026, reproduced the text of UFBU circular no. 2026/38 dated 02.10.2026 .

The current Policy on Group Medical Insurance coverage for in-service employees and retirees (other than SBI) is getting ended on 31-10-2026 and hence the Policy has to be renewed for the year 2026-27.

The issue was taken up by UFBU with IBA and it has been decided that this year also, the Policy would be a combined Policy for both in-service employees and retired employees. The Policy at present covers about 5,70,000 in service employees and about 1,53,000 retired employees.

Based on the discussions between the IBA and UFBU, the following modifications/improvements are being incorporated in the ensuing renewed Policy for 2026-27.

Improvements / New Features:

➢ **Room rent per day** is increased from **Rs 5,000 to Rs. 7,000.**

➢ **ICU rent per day** is increased from **Rs 7,500 to Rs. 9,500.**

➢ The above are applicable for the six metro cities, i.e. Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore and Hyderabad, and their urban agglomeration.

➢ Maternity expenses coverage is increased from **Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1,00,000**, for normal delivery and from **Rs. 75,000 to Rs. 1,50,000 for Cesarean section,** which is inclusive of

➢ Expenses related to baby care (covering the period from delivery to discharge of the newly born) within the **overall maternity limit,** subsuming the previous **separate cap of Rs. 20,000.**

➢ Vaccination expenses (for children up to 1 year of age during the policy tenure, adhering to the National Immunisation Schedule issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Government of India) - not included in the coverage of 2025-26 policy- are now covered within the overall Maternity limit

The **Ex-gratia payable to Employees in case of Critical Illness** shall be increased from **Rs.1,00,000** in 2025-26 policy to **Rs. 2,00,000.**

The limit for **cataract treatment** is increased from **Rs.40,000 to Rs.50,000** per eye (inclusive of cost of any type of lens along with the associated pre and post-hospitalization expenses).

Dependent income eligibility limits have increased from 18,000 per month in the 2025-26 policy to **Rs. 24,000 per month.**

Infertility treatment was not included in the 2025-26 base policy, requiring employees to bear premium for top-up coverage (which covered infertility treatment). **Infertility coverage is now included in the base policy** for all employees in 2026-27, featuring a dedicated standalone limit of Rs. 2 lacs for eligible needy employees.

The following will be covered for all insured

➢ Albumin infusion shall be included under daycare list of procedures.

➢ Penitoneal dialysis will be covered under the Base Policy, with or without hospitalisation.

➢ Expenses on oral chemotherapy shall include cost of oral chemotherapy drugs, professional consultation fees, and all medically necessary investigations, as advised by the consulting physician.

➢ **The following shall be included under domiciliary treatment.**

➢ Vector-borne diseases, such as Dengue and Chikungunya.

➢ Rare diseases listed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Govt. of India under Group 2 and Group 3.

PREMIUM RATES FOR 2026-27 (WITHOUT GST)
Employee Premium – will be paid by the Bank

	Substaff & clerical staff	Scale I to V	Scale VI & VII
Medical Insurance coverage	4 Lakhs	5.25 Lakhs	7 Lakhs
Premium	36,200	46,467	68,454

Retired employees

	Substaff & clerical staff		Scale I to V	Scale VI & VII	
	3 Lakhs	4 Lakhs	5.25 Lakhs	5.25 Lakhs	7 Lakhs
Retiree with Spouse	27,996	32,144	41,714	41,714	62,213
Retiree – Single Person	25,197	30,329	38,552	38,552	49,770

Retiree Add-on policy Premium	3 Lakhs	4 Lakhs	5.25 Lakhs	7 Lakhs
To add Physically / Mentally challenged dependent family member	10,001	12,501	15,001	35,001

Top-up for Retirees

Top-up policy premium	1 Lakh	2 Lakhs	3 Lakhs	4 Lakhs
Retiree with Spouse	13,126	21,001	30,801	41,001
Retiree – Single Person	11,152	17,851	26,176	32,801

Add-on Top up policy premium	1 Lakh	2 Lakhs	3 Lakhs	4 Lakhs
Physically / Mentally challenged dependent family member of Retiree with or without Spouse – Per dependent	5,001	10,001	20,001	30,001

All Bank managements will be issuing their Circulars in this regard. Thereafter, retirees can submit their options and remit the premium. Units are aware that UFBU has taken up the issue of cost of premium on the Medical Insurance Policy to be borne by the respective Bank managements has already been taken up with the IBA and it is also included in the Residual Issues.■

REG: PLI SCHEME – MODIFICATION IN THE REVISED FORMULA

Text of AIBOC Circular No. 2026/78, dated 09.10.2026, reproduced the text of UFBU letter no. 2026/9 dated 09.10.2026 addressed to the Chief Executive, Indian Banks' Association, Mumbai

We refer to the following part of the Minutes signed on 27th September, 2026 on the above issue.

Clause (b)

As regards the PLI Scheme for Scale IV and above officers, the discussions can start with IBA to propose modifications to the Government in the scheme to address the observations of the Unions/ Associations.

Right from the time in November, 2024, when the Government advised the Banks on the revised PLI Scheme for Officers in Scale IV and above, we have been taking up the issue with IBA with our objections on the following grounds:

(i) Any change or modification in Scheme should be bilaterally discussed;

(ii) The basic soul of the Scheme is and should continue to be incentive based on collective performance;

(iii) The main feature of the Scheme is and should continue to be uniformity in the norms for incentive.

We are happy that the Scheme has been kept in abeyance. As mentioned in the Minutes signed on 27th September, 2026, IBA has agreed to start the discussions to propose modification in the Scheme.

As you are aware, the revised scheme for officers in scale IV to VIII for the year 2024-25 has already been implemented and higher quantum of PLI has been disbursed to these officers involving substantial cost. We also note that 20% of the Officers in Scale IV to Scale VIII have not been paid any PLI.

Hence, pending discussions on the modifications in the scheme for the year 2025-26 and onwards, it is necessary to review the PLI paid for the year 2024-25 to Award staff and officers staff upto Scale III and also about the Scale IV to VIII officers who were not paid any PLI even though all of them have been very much a part of the overall performance of the Bank. In the interest of equity and fair play and keeping the essence of the existing scheme as provided in the Bipartite Settlement/Joint Note, this issue needs to be discussed and sorted. We request you to arrange the meeting for the discussion so that the issue can be resolved amicably and mutually.■

NOTE: It is hereby informed that, with effect from July 2026, the circulation of hard copies of Officers' Cause shall be discontinued, pursuant to the decision taken at the 5th Meeting of the 29th Executive Committee. Members are requested to kindly note that the publication will continue to be made available in digital format. The web copy of the magazine may be viewed and downloaded from the official AISBOF website: "https://aisbof.org"
Members are requested to visit the website regularly to access the latest issues and other publications. For any queries or further clarification, please write to us at aisbofbangalore@gmail.com.
We request all members to kindly take note of the above and extend their cooperation

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