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24th August 2020

Circular No.26/2020

To All Units & Colleagues

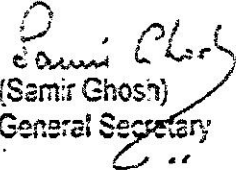
Dear friends,

Bank's letter – AIRBEA's response

On 20th August 2020 Bank sent to AIRBEA their letter alleging "raising the issues beyond the scope of the Association". The tenor and content of the letter surprised us. We were also taken aback that the letter became viral immediately – who were instrumental, we do not know. Those against AIRBEA, its legacy and commitment to RBI as an institution and its staff, became active. The AIRBEA office bearers collectively decided to respond with dignity. We do not want the mutual relationship of the Bank and the Association to drift but keep it on an even keel which has been our consistent endeavour. Also, AIRBEA with its near century- long existence cannot be silenced. Bank's letter and our response are reproduced. Units may keep our members and friends apprised.

With greetings,

Yours fraternally,


(Samir Ghosh)
General Secretary

"Bank's letter CO.HRMD. NO.1069 /29.19.00/2020-21 dated 20th August 2020"

As you are aware, All India Reserve Bank Employees Association (AIRBEA) is a trade union recognised by the Bank to represent the serving Class III employees of the Bank in accordance with the Code of Discipline agreed to in the tripartite meeting held in March 1966 between Labour Ministry, Reserve Bank of India and the unions representing workmen employees in the Bank.

2. Lately, it has been observed that the AIRBEA is repeatedly flagging issues with the Bank which do not pertain to the cadre it represents, i.e., serving Class III employees of the Bank. As AIRBEA is authorised to represent only the serving Class III employees, it should limit itself to the issues pertaining to its own cadre and the Bank is under no obligation to take note of any other issues raised by the AIRBEA. It only serves to vitiate the industrial relations situation in the Bank.

3. In view of the above, AIRBEA is advised to refrain from taking up issues which are outside its scope and to take up only those issues which pertain to the cadre it represents.

“ AIRBEA’s letter to Bank No. GS.Spl / 50 /2020 dated 24th August 2020”

Please refer to your letter CO. HRMD. No. 1069/29.19.00/2020-21 dated the August 20, 2020.

For your kind information, AIRBEA accepted the Code of Discipline as applicable to RBI in April 1991 and not in 1966. This must be in Bank’s record.

AIRBEA is recognized by the Bank since long before that as sole representative and bargaining union for the class III staff of the Bank. Acceptance of the Code does not preclude the AIRBEA from referring to others inside the Bank and outside to buttress the issues of class III staff of the Bank, in view of proportionality, relativity, benefits, privileges etc. That we have been doing from time immemorial and Bank never objected to it.

For past few months we have been writing to the Bank on many issues pertaining to the class III staff of the Bank. Those remain pending, most unfortunately. Even a few issues which could be discussed mutually, across the table, remain still to be resolved without any progress. We do not propose to enlist here all such pending, unresolved issues of the serving class III staff lest this communication becomes too long.

As far as we recall, we have taken up with the Bank after the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the nation issues of 1) reduction in rate(s) of interest of House Building Loan and other advances for the staff in keeping with sliding interest rates at the instance of RBI, which is an important issue of RBI class III staff as well 2) risk allowance for bank’s class III staff accompanying remittance of currency notes to far away places risking exposure to infection. 3) insurance of Bank’s dispensary staff including class III pharmacists in context of COVID-19 situation 4) adequate compensation, financial or otherwise, for families of Bank’s staff including class III staff dying in harness due to the pandemic (there have been a few unfortunate cases of death already) 5) reimbursement in full of the cost of treatment for Corona virus infection of Bank’s retirees including retired class III staff 6) review of Bank’s GMP 2020-21 for Bank’s retired class III staff (workmen) which AIRBEA considers as having gaps and loopholes making increase in total limit a misnomer, affecting adversely Bank’s retired workmen and suggested remedies requesting Bank’s compassion, *et al.*

On the issues as above Bank have so far not taken any positive decision, nor have there been any dialogue.

Though Bank’s letter does not specify, “for raising issues outside the scope of the Association” “lately”, Bank, most probably, might be insinuating superannuation and medical issues of retired class III staff, raised by the Association.

If so, may we please refer to the following :

- a) On issues of pension updation, pension option, OPD scheme etc—all related to Bank’s retired staff, Bank’s highest authorities discussed with AIRBEA and other serving employees/officers’ Associations/Federation from 2006 onwards, without any objection at any point of time,
- b) AIRBEA along with other recognized serving employees/officers’ bodies talked with our Hon’ble Governor on retirees’ issues wherein he evinced sympathy and showed unique positive approach, for which we are grateful,
- c) In the banking industry, serving bank employees and officers’ organisations are pursuing bank retirees’ issues, superannuation and medical benefits, with Indian Banks Association (IBA) and through them with the Govt. of India
- d) In Central Govt. Pay Commissions, which are quasi-judicial bodies, set up periodically by the Government, the serving staff/officers’ bodies argue about retirees’ benefits , with the Commission appropriately taking note of that
- e) Retirees’ issues form part of our (AIRBEA) Charter of Demands pending with the Bank. Earlier also, during bipartite negotiations with AIRBEA, Bank discussed retirees’ issues and decided on some of these.

- f) Superannuation and medical benefits of class III staff, post retiral, are parts of service condition of class III staff, and as such are within the remit of AIRBEA, you will please acknowledge.

Earlier tribunal and arbitration awards regarding Bank's class III staff adjudged on retiral benefits, raised by the AIRBEA. We also recall that pursuant to the wage agreement between the Bank and AIRBEA in September 1979 Bank formed a joint committee under the chairmanship of Sri.Tambe , the then Executive Director, to discuss introduction of pension in RBI, and the process culminated in 1990 with finalization of Bank's pension scheme. All these are on record.

It may also be mentioned that the then DFS Secretary, Shri Rajiv Thakru, IAS discussed on behalf of the Finance Ministry the up-dation issue in RBI with AIRBEA and other Unions, not once but twice, in Jammu and Mumbai respectively.

All this show that neither judicial authorities, nor the Government representative or RBI dispensations raised any cavil to AIRBEA and serving staff bodies pursuing reitrees' issues.

Bank's stand all along have been accommodative and pro-active, which was highly welcome.

Bank's contention now is, therefore, unprecedented and surprising. An unfortunate disconnect is perceptible which should be removed.

Your allegation, as stated, of AIRBEA "vitiating industrial relations in the Bank" pains us the most.

You are kindly aware and will definitely appreciate that AIRBEA have always been very alert and particular in keeping industrial relation in the Bank on an even keel. Many a schismatic issue could be peacefully resolved by mutual efforts, you may please recall. AIRBEA assures to continue to co-operate with the Bank as hitherto.