

# STATE BANK OF INDIA OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

## (BENGAL CIRCLE)

(Registered under Trade Unions Act 1921-Regd. No. 6908)

1, STRAND ROAD, KOLKATA-700 001.

Phone: 2213-0663, 2213-0154, 2213-0665 (after 5.30 P.M.), Fax : (033) 2210-1684

e-mail: sbioabengalcircle@gmail.com

IP No. 500077



Circular No. 21/2016

Date : 05.05.2016

### To All Members (Please Circulate)

We reproduce hereunder the Circular No. 63 dated 05.05.2016 issued by General Secretary, All India State Bank Officers' Federation, the contents of which are self-explicit.

With revolutionary greetings,

Soumya Datta  
(General Secretary)

To all our Affiliates / Members:

## **MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS** **OUR RED SALUTE TO GARMENT WORKERS**

The Garment workers in Bangalore and other centers which caters to the need of garment exports to the extent of 80 to 85% employing more than 5 lac workers were in the street on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2016 leaving the entire Government machinery dumbstruck. More than 75,000 workers gathered in the streets of Bengaluru to express their protest against the restriction on withdrawal of Provident Fund accruals for their personal/social expenditure such as children's education, marriage, medical assistance etc. The Government without bothering about the protest by the unions including the Central Trade Unions went ahead with a number of such proposals both at the time of the budget presentation and thereafter. The last attempt was preventing the workers from withdrawing the Provident Fund balance which was opposed tooth and nail by the garment workers. The Provident Fund was last source to fall back upon for more than 5,00,000 employees in the garment industry in Bengaluru at times of emergency such as medical expenditure, the education and marriage of children, a break in service or change over to other company etc. The Garment Industry is thriving mainly due to the cheap and skilled labor. The greatest menace in the recent past in the garment industry is large scale outsourcing of the work to outside agencies. The workers are employed on a temporary basis. In the recent past the employment opportunities have been curtailed due to the outsourcing of the unskilled work to outside contract agencies. The outsourcing is resorted to avoid the establishment expenses such as provision of ESI facilities, Provident Fund subscription, bonus etc., to the workers. The garment workers are not organized. The news of the placing restrictions in regard to the withdrawal of the Provident Fund spread like a wild fire and within hours the garment workers all over the city assembled in large number to protest their action. There was no strike call. It was self-declared strike by the workers to show their anger against the ill-advised moves of the Government at the Center. The road blockades affected the traffic and the entire city was under turmoil. The Police had to use force to break the strikers. But the message was strong and loud. The credit must go to these unsung workers who on their own raised voice of protest against the Government whenever the Government attempted to hit at the belly of the workers in the country.

2. It is a great success story. The Government without any hesitation reversed and withdrew all those proposals. Even before we could understand the strike in Toto it had not only accomplished its objectives but had sent a strong message to the Government that they cannot ignore the workers in the unorganized sector. The strike action was covered extensively both in the electronic media as well as print media mainly because of the massive participation of workers in the strike and their courage to withstand the abuse of power by the police authorities. The blockade of roads at important center threw out of gear, the normal transportation system in the Metro city of Bengaluru for 2 days. A series of debates are going on as to how to campaign against the various moves of the Government which affects the common man including the work force in the country.

3. The workers in the garment industry are working under trying circumstances. They are not allowed to form unions. The working conditions are horrible. The treatment meted out to the garment workers has become a topic for discussion. More than 85% are women workers in the garment industry. They get low wages between 7000 – 8000. They are not even given time to go to the toilet. Therefore, in utter fear, they avoid drinking water. They are the main bread winners in the family and hence will suffer in silence all abuses that are hurled against them including sexual harassment.

Soumya Datta  
General Secretary  
Mobile : 9830044737

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4. The unionization of workforce in the garment industry is a Herculean task. The total number of members unionized in the banking industry is less than 5%. The strike participation was total and if things would not have settled by the Central Government perhaps it would have been disastrous for the State as well as the Central Government. The workers who join the unions are thrown out of the job on certain flimsy grounds. They are compelled to work beyond the working hours. The overtime is denied in many cases. The supervisors abuse the workers for not fulfilling the target. The smaller units provide accommodation to the workers who come from the neighbouring districts/ states and expect them to work beyond the working hours.
5. A number of social organizations have conducted study of the working conditions of the garment workers. They have not provided any relief to the garment workers. Child labour was rampant in the industry and still continues, due to the active connivance of the government departments. The garment companies have a link with outside contractors who mobilize the workers and provide them work on contract as a part of outsourcing of the work by the garment industry. They are not provided any social safety network and the benefit of Provident Fund and as well as ESI Dispensary facilities.
6. The garment industry is an extended arm of the Textile Industry. When the Government went for globalization and signed blindly the WTO Agreement for opening up of the textile sector, it resulted in a series of setbacks to the textile as well as the garment industries in our country. The workers in the garment industry have paid heavily, due to the Indian Government signing the WTO agreement on textile. They are yet to recover from those developments.
7. There is a need to have a separate authority to regulate the functioning of the garment industry with particular reference to the welfare of the workers employed in the garment industry. These workers are neither provided protection by the State Government nor the Central Government since the lobby of Garment Industry is so powerful that none of the labour laws can be effectively implemented in the garment industry due to the arbitrariness of the owners of the industry. The Unions could play a very limited role due to the difficulties involved in organising of the workers in the garment factories.
8. It is in fitness of things that we should remember and salute the garment workers who struck work for 2 days and displayed such a massive power of unity. Let us pay our respect and compliments to all those who have struggled and sacrificed in the process of making the working condition better in the Garment industry for the last several years. The last strike was a feather in the cap of the unorganized sector and deserves our Red Salute on the occasion of May Day. It is also a reminder to all our comrades that the Governments and the employers always try to exploit. The attempts to privatize and outsource will one day bring the Public Sector Undertakings and the Banking Industry under grip of such draconian masters, who don't bother about manpower, Human beings, welfare concepts and fair working conditions. Such people would take the workers back to the dingy days of the Pre-Industrial revolution era of total exploitation and maximization of individual profits at the cost of workers. Therefore on the occasion of May Day we should all unite to oppose such privatization attempts and save the Public Sector, which are the temples of the country.

**LONG LIVE OUR UNITY,**

**MARCH ON COMRADES, MARCH ON.....**

With revolutionary greetings,



**(Y.SUDARSHAN)  
GENERAL SECRETARY**