

STATE BANK OF INDIA OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

(BENGAL CIRCLE)

(Registered under Trade Unions Act 1926-Regd. No. 6908)

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To All Members (Please Circulate)

We reproduce hereunder the Circular No. 70 dated 01.12.2022 issued by the General Secretary, All India State Bank Officers' Federation, the contents of which are self-explicit.

With revolutionary greetings,

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay
(General Secretary)

BIDDING ADIEU TO THE LEGENDARY TRADE UNION STALWART COM. SOUMYA DATTA

Com Soumya Datta, General of the All Secretary India State Bank Officers' Federation (AISBOF) and the All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC) has demitted office on attaining superannuation from the bank's service on 30th November 2022 after putting in more than 35 years of illustrious service in the bank.



2. Born in Kolkata on 27th November 1962, Com. Datta completed his graduation in Economics from the prestigious Jadavpur University. Later, he completed his LLB and in pursuit of his passion for knowledge and academic excellence, went on to obtain an MBA, LLM, and CFP degrees and complete the CAIIB.

3. He joined the State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur as a Probationary Officer on 10th November 1986. After three months, he eventually joined the State Bank of India as a Probationary Officer on 2nd February 1987 and reported to Krishnagar Branch for his first branch training.

4. In an unparalleled & befitting felicitation ceremony at the historic Mahajyati Sadan at Kolkata on 26.11.2022, Hon'ble Chairman SBI Shri Dinesh Kumar Khara, DMD (HR) & CDO Shri O P Mishra & CGM SBI Kolkata Circle Shri Anup Kumar Sinha bid farewell to our stalwart leader in the presence of the AISBOF Leadership and unprecedented gathering of comrades from all across the country.



5. On the occasion an exceptional documentary was played portraying the journey of Com. Soumya Datta from his childhood to this day and the reminiscence of the same by the stalwart had been the glittering takeaways from the event.

6. The event marked an unprecedented

vibrancy with an agglomeration of an enthusiastic and electrifying assemblance in the jam-packed venue that has a history of sophistication and majesty of its own. It was the love and respect for the iconic leader of the congregated members from all across the circle as well as from different parts of the country that created a memorable and mesmerising atmosphere that will remain fresh in the memories of the audience for a long.



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7. As a trade union leader, Com. Datta has shown an uncompromising stance on issues of social and economic justice, ensuring the dignity and self-esteem of the officers' fraternity, fighting for fairness of pay and perquisites and other financial benefits to enable a decent living, congenial work environment and work-life balance, and regularly ameliorating the grievances of the common members. He has been perseverant in highlighting all such issues before the management during his long journey as a trade union leader. This will remain his enduring legacy in the annals of the trade union movement in the banking industry. With a fine blend of his ability to develop and inspire people and rare pragmatism, as well as his transparency, he has demonstrated an instinctive feel for the welfare of common members.



8. I applaud Com. Soumya Datta for years of yeoman service to the State Bank of India as a Banker and his unparalleled commitment and achievements as a gritty trade union leader, fearlessly spearheading the Banking trade union movement in the country for the past 4 years. Com Datta, always believed in the adage that "a leader should always lead by example". From the very beginning of his career in the SBI, his propensity to work for the cause of the officers' fraternity and his commitment towards taking up the cause of civil society and the less privileged sections of society prompted him to opt-out of a bright career in the banking services despite having multiple professional qualifications and a proven academic record. He led many campaigns to their logical end and was successful in bringing a plethora of benefits to the Officers' community. He went on to become one of India's pre-eminent trade union leaders, deeply respected amongst the rank and file across the country.

9. Com. Datta has traversed a long and eventful journey as a trade unionist since his confirmation in the bank's service in the year 1989 and contributed immensely to the cause of the officers' community under the banner of the AISBOF and the AIBOC as well. The very fact that he plunged into trade union activities from the day he started his career in the State Bank of India and dominated centre stage for more than three decades, speaks volumes of his leadership qualities, his acumen, and his empathy for common members. He also excelled at various sports including football, table tennis, swimming, and hockey, and is a regular quarter marathon runner. He was a University Blue at hockey. He actively participated in literacy missions and environmental awareness programmes. He also excelled at quizzing and debates. He actively participated in the students' movement at Jadavpur University, which possibly laid the foundation of his ideology, his principles, and his general attitude to life.

10. His stewardship of the trade union movement has been marked by prudence as well as a humane perspective and vision for the enduring welfare of officers and a congenial work environment. He made numerous valuable contributions to the improvement of pay scales, and perquisites, ensuring the respect and dignity of officers, and waging a battle against injustices. His excellent negotiation skills came to the fore during the last wage negotiation talks as he matched the stalwarts of the IBA negotiating team word for word. No quarters were asked for and no quarters were conceded. This paved the way for a historic settlement against all odds.

11. When the top management in the SBI launched a scathing attack on the top union leaders across the country, he fought valiantly against such a move by the management despite huge personal suffering, which bears testimony to his courage and convictions. This also possibly made him what he is today.

12. As President of the Federation, I am indeed fortunate to have enjoyed a very close and longstanding association with Soumya Datta ji, who can aptly be accentuated as a down-to-earth person, sincere, hardworking and honest to the core. While penning down these lines, my memory goes back to the year 2008 when I met him for the first time and that was the dawn of a very strong bond between us. As a new entrant in the Executive Committee of the Federation after a few years, it was inspiring and interesting to observe the contribution of a seasoned leader in Com. Soumya Datta. I found in him a leader with a golden kind heart always humane in his approach.

13. Comrade Datta's strategic thinking, strong leadership qualities, respect for colleagues, ready wit and great sense of humour are just a few of the reasons that he is an inspiration to all of us. Indeed, his exceptional qualities have inspired us in so many ways and he is popularly known as "the members' General Secretary". He has put tremendous effort into instilling values such as determination, tolerance, equity, patience, honesty and professional stewardship. His monumental contribution towards the forward march of the AISBOF and AIBOC is perhaps unparalleled. He has been instrumental in strengthening the Federation and the Confederation by dint of sheer industry, vision and the ability to carry everyone along.

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14. Com. Datta is the embodiment of optimism and hard work. He is not only a brilliant and dedicated leader, but he is also an exceptional human being. His commitment to the cause of officers is unparalleled. His octogenarian mother was bedridden due to geriatric problems and needed constant care and attention from her son. But Com. Datta could hardly devote time to her because he was often out of station due to his preoccupation with organizational work, especially the crucial salary revision talks. He has brought inspirational leadership to the AISBOF. We have been incredibly honoured and extremely privileged to have Com. Soumya Datta at the helm of affairs. His leadership has been a beacon for the trade union movement in the country. The intervening years since Com Datta's elevation to the post of General Secretary have witnessed a transformation in the physical and intellectual landscape of the trade union movement in the banking sector.

15. Com Soumya Datta has also been an inspiration to many who pursue career advancement and knowledge empowerment. He has conducted promotional classes for job aspirants since 2008. His blog "SBI Step Up" was followed by candidates across the country. He took regular classes for new recruits as a guest faculty member at the Kolkata Training Centre of SBI. He is a regular member of the guest faculty at disciplinary workshops conducted by affiliates of the AIBOC. In fact, he has been invited as a guest lecturer by eminent management institutes on the topic of 'Art of Negotiation' and 'Leadership Development. As an officer, he excelled in various assignments. During his stint as Nodal Officer (C & ITU) at PBBU, SBI Kolkata LHO, the circle became the pan India topper in corporate package accounts. A stickler for discipline, he would always be the first to reach the office throughout his entire service life. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he is a born trade unionist as he spent his entire service life for the trade union movement while his other batch mates worked towards promotion into the upper management echelons.

16. There is not an iota of doubt that he possesses a rare combination of vision, fairness, and understanding- crucial qualities for a successful leader. Simplicity, straightforwardness, compassion, warmth and welcoming behaviour- he is an amalgamation of all these good human qualities. In all his assignments in the journey of the trade union movement, he showed the professionalism of a true trade unionist, and superb collective bargaining and negotiation skills, which often helped him to sail through difficult situations. He always believed that to drive home a point one needs to improve the quality of arguments and not raise his voice. Rarely has one seen him flustered as he would always display a calm demeanour in the face of adversity. His innate ability and vision have given the AISBOF and AIBOC a leading edge in the industry. This takes a leader with great integrity, the spirit of eternal optimism, a clear vision, humanity and respect for all. Com. Datta has done an absolutely incredible job and AISBOF is fortunate to have had his leadership. His contribution will remain a legacy forever, enabling the AISBOF to rise to new heights.

17. He is respected widely by the management both at the Circle and the Corporate levels. The felicitation organized by the Bank on 6th November 2022 in Mumbai was unprecedented for any General Secretary of the Federation and bears testimony to his stature. In an unprecedented gesture, Shri Dinesh Khara ji, Chairman of the SBI, personally attended the felicitation program organized by the Federation in Kolkata on 26th November 2022.

18. The year 2012-13 was the most turbulent period in the history of the officers' movement in the SBI. However, Com. Datta exhibited impeccable leadership qualities and provided exemplary support to Com. Y. Sudarshan, the then General Secretary of the Federation, to steer the Federation out of those storm-tossed waters. The most glorious moment came on 1st July 2018 when he was unanimously elected President of the AISBOF. He was also elected General Secretary of the AIBOC on 1st July 2018, while on 1st May 2019, he was elected General Secretary of the AISBOF. In this capacity, he led more than one lakh officers in the State Bank Group, a position he held with distinction till his retirement.

19. His involvement with the SBIOA (Bengal Circle) started way back in 1990 when he was elected Asstt Secretary, Ranaghat Composite unit in the year 1990; he was later elevated to a Zonal Committee Member in 1993. His sterling performance as an activist facilitated his election as President of the Commercial Branch Kolkata in 1994 and he became Asstt. Zonal Secretary in 1995. With his leadership qualities, acumen and vision, he was the automatic choice for the post of Regional Committee Member, Kolkata in 1996. Thereafter, he was inducted as a member of the Central Committee. His uncompromising stance on the principle of equity and justice and his deep commitment to the general interest of common members created some roadblocks as he did not budge to make unholy compromises in his journey on the ladder of elevation to senior Union positions till 2006, when he was elected Asstt. Secretary, Circle Association. Impressing all who observed him with his organizing skills and empathy towards common members, in 2010 he was elected Deputy General Secretary, Bengal Circle and in 2012 he was the automatic choice for the post of President, SBIOA Bengal Circle. In 2015 he was elected General Secretary, SBIOA Bengal Circle. Com. Datta's thirty-two years of the journey from a common member to the top position of the Federation and Confederation is phenomenal; he inspires

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all members and office bearers with his devotion and dedication. He has always exhibited the rare qualities of an ardent campaigner and an ace negotiator when he brought a bonanza of benefits and other facilities to the officers working in the State Bank. His valiant campaigns against the wrongful economic policies of the Government and his crusade against the threat of bank privatization will remain a golden chapter in the history of the banking industry. He championed the cause of the public sector throughout his career. The pan India campaign of 'Bank Bachao Desh Bachao' launched under his leadership has so far thwarted the Government of India from presenting the necessary Bill in the Parliament for the privatization of some PSU Banks. The Bharat Yatra conceptualised by him will be etched in golden letters in the annals of the history of the Confederation.

20. By his hard work, negotiating skills, gift of the gab, amiable character, humility, modesty and unassuming nature he has emerged as an icon during his lifetime. His connection with young people is worthy of emulation. Many generations to come in the banking industry will remember and cherish the era of Com. Soumya Datta, has left an indelible impression in the minds of lakhs of officers and employees. Those who have crossed swords with him realized that beneath the 'soft' outer layer, lies a steely inner resoluteness.

21. In Com. Soumya I see a perseverant negotiator who never buckles under pressure. He is always patient and thorough in his approach. He has been a key person for the Federation in each and every negotiation. Words cannot express quite how helpful and effective his guidance and advice have been in unlocking many critical situations. Comrade Soumya Datta will always rank high among the eminent leaders in the history of the trade union movement. We salute him for his vision, unmatched leadership, work ethic and especially for his sense of humour and goodwill. We have and will continue to value his leadership and tireless commitment to our trade union movement, his advice and his unending support.

22. He raised each and every issue and followed up vigorously for its resolution. He contributed immensely to the Survey on Work-Life Balance with the help of the Mumbai Circle Association and shared the report highlighting ground realities with the management. The report and efforts were appreciated and his suggestions to address the issue have been duly considered by the Management. Com. Datta is a very effective communicator and has always made himself accessible to common members. As General Secretary of the SBIOA (Bengal Circle) and even during his tenure as Federation and Confederation General Secretary, he would often visit hospitals in the city on holidays to visit ailing members of the SBI family. He also personally defended many critical cases and ensured that justice is done to members. His acumen in respect of disciplinary cases and vast knowledge of the banking space has left an indelible impact; he has protected and brought justice to several members. We are deeply grateful for his support and guidance and we respect the values espoused by him while discharging his role as a trade union leader.

23. We are bidding adieu to Com. Datta with a truly heavy heart. We will miss his wisdom, experience and guidance, his smile and his signature attire: the white shirt with the letters AIBOC/ AISBOF embossed on it and the black backpack slung over his shoulder. Though not to our liking, yet an inevitable moment has come and we bid him farewell only to be inspired to achieve the noble ideals cherished by him. This will be the lode stone to our hearts and the lode star to our eyes.



24. On my personal behalf as well as on behalf of the Federation, I take this opportunity to wish Com. Soumya Datta a very active, happy, healthy, peaceful and contented retired life. We will be failing in our duty if we do not place on record the unwavering cooperation and support extended by his wife Mrs. Nipa Datta, a school teacher by profession, and his daughter Ms Shinjini Datta, who is working as a Senior Research Analyst in CRISIL. Both of them have borne the brunt of isolation during his campaigns and struggles. But without their support, he would not have reached the pinnacle of his achievements. We fervently believe that Com Datta is just retiring from the

bank's service on superannuation, but he is not quitting the battlefield on which he has fought so valiantly for the cause of society in general and members in particular. We will feel extremely privileged to have the benefit of his guidance as the AISBOF marches forward.

With greetings,

Comradely yours,

Sd/-

(Deepak K Sharma)

General Secretary

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