



ALL INDIA BANK EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

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TO ALL UNITS AND MEMBERS:

Dear Comrades,

**65 Years ago, on 23rd September, 1954.
Historic 1st All India Strike by AIBEA**

It is a glorious occasion to recall today that 65 years ago, on 23rd September in 1954, bank employees observed the first All India strike at the call of AIBEA. That was an entirely different period. Bank employees were just getting organised in various States and in different Banks. Unions were not there in all the Banks as yet. There was no system of collective bargaining and no mechanism of Bipartite Settlement. Unions were fighting before Tribunals.

The 1st All India Tribunal was **Sen Tribunal** which gave its Award in August, 1950 but unfortunately at the behest of the bankers, the Award was declared as void on technical grounds.

Then the demands were referred to **H.V. Divatia Tribunal** in July, 1951 but this Tribunal resigned.

Hence in January, 1952, the issues were referred to **Sastry Tribunal**. Various Bank-wise Unions along with AIBEA argued before the Tribunal **demanding wage increase** and in April, 1953, the Sastry Award was published.

But **Sastry Award resulted in wage cut** & hence AIBEA agitated against it. The matter was referred to **Labour Appellate Tribunal (LAT)**. In April, 1954, LAT gave its Award modifying Sastry Award to some extent in favour of the employees so that there is no wage cut.

The Bankers approached the Government and unfortunately the then **Government** led by Nehruji succumbed to their pressure and illegally **modified the LAT Award in August, 1954**. 145Employees' hope and faith on the Government were belied. They lost their patience. AIBEA could not tolerate this injustice.

Hence AIBEA gave its first call for All India Strike on 23rd September, 1954.

Government expected that bank employees will not join the strike in any big way and the strike would fail. Managements also predicted that the strike would be a failure. But, The **strike was a stupendous success**. Employees joined the strike with total anger.

Following this successful strike, AIBEA met in Chennai in its Conference and **gave the call for indefinite strike from 10-12-1954**. The preparation for the indefinite strike was such that it created an impact on the Government. Cabinet met to discuss the issue and the then Labour Minister Shri V V Giri openly criticized Nehru for illegal interference in the legal Award. In protest against Govt. decision and supporting AIBEA, Shri **V V Giri resigned from the Cabinet**. All these forced the Government to relent and Nehruji announced that his announcement will be withdrawn and wage cut will not be imposed.

Thus, **the first All India Strike by AIBEA on 23.9.1954 was an epoch making strike and thus began our journey of struggles in our fight for better wages and improvement in service conditions.**

65 years later, we look back with pride to our glorious struggles and innumerable achievements.

But we observe that even today there are increasing attacks on our jobs, job security, job permanency, on our wages, service conditions, on our rights and benefits.

65 years ago, AIBEA started using its weapon of strikes. In the last more than six decades AIBEA has launched so many strike actions during our fight against injustice to bank employees. We have to continue this legacy and commitment to struggle. AIBEA is our university where we learnt why to unite and how to fight. That is why we are proud of our beloved organisation.

With greetings,

Yours Comradely,



**C.H. VENKATACHALAM
GENERAL SECRETARY**