



ALL INDIA BANK PENSIONERS' & RETIREES' CONFEDERATION

(A.I.B.P.A.R.C.)

C/O BANK OF INDIA OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

(EASTERN INDIA BRANCHES)

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(For circulation among all the members of the Managing Committee as well as the Governing Council of AIBPARC, Special Invitees, State Secretaries and Advisors with a request to percolate the information to the grassroots.)

Dear Comrades,

**HAPPY VIJAYA DASAMI / HAPPY DUSSEHRA / HAPPY PRE-DEEPAVALI GREETINGS
IN AN UNHAPPY CLIMATE FOR THE RETIREES OF THE BANKING SECTOR OF INDIA**

With the advent of winter, the nature around us is cooling down; the smell of festivity is still in our body and mind; but who will pacify the turbulence of our soul? Not to speak of other issues, who will take care of the addition of salt as an insult to the existing injuries already remaining in our mind? We mean the unexpected and unheard of escalation of the premium of the Group Medical Scheme of IBA.

2. In line with the guidelines received from IBA, different banks have already issued circulars stating the amount of premium to be paid by the retirees for two specific options – renewal on as is where in basis by paying an amount which is more than double of the earlier one and another extremely inadequate provision of reimbursement of domiciliary expenses within the overall limit and that too by paying further escalated amount.

3. Now the retirees are caught in an un-escapable trap – if they abandon, they stand no-where because they have already eschewed the earlier running policies and if they are to pay to include themselves in the scheme, they have to do it with tremendous hardship. We have an apprehension that a good number of retirees will not be in a position to renew the policy for paucity of funds. Not to speak of the insurance company and the TPA, does the IBA not know what quantum of monthly pension is received by many of the bank retirees of our country?

4. Let us have a look at the circumstances that prevailed in the year 2015. With the signing of 10th Bipartite Settlement, the extension of the benefits of IBA's group medical scheme to the retirees was sold as an enviable commodity and we devoured it with much eagerness on several assumptions viz. : this was an industry-wise policy and its stability was beyond question: although it was renewable every year, there might be marginal escalation of premium and that management of the respective banks might take some responsibility of financial burden of retirees as they are taking full burden for the existing employees; there would not be major changes in terms and conditions without having dialogue with the parties to the bipartite. This is not exactly known to us whether IBA had dialogue with the parties to the bipartite in respect of such a hefty rise of premium. IBA's contention that an in-service employee and a retired employee will have to pay the same premium does not carry force because the benefits given to both the groups are different. The net result is that our younger brothers are not hurt whereas we the elders are financially hurt. People are conveniently forgetting that an employee of today is a retiree of tomorrow. It is virtually an extension of one chapter to the other.

5. Many of our members have a sentimental query : what then the organisation has done? It is well clarified that AIBPARC and CBPRO took up the issue well in advance in a documented manner with IBA and demanded substantial/total relief for the retirees. Our circular no. 29/16 dated 23.09.2016 and CBPRO's circular dated 12.09.2016 are instances in point. Regular contacts were maintained to ascertain what exactly was going to happen. It will not be out of place to mention here that some confusion and false hopes were raised in the minds of the members by an email of CBPRO dated 06.10.2016 addressed to the General Secretaries of all the constituents of CBPRO. The mistake was detected within one hour and an elaborate circular was issued by CBPRO on 07.10.2016 explaining the whole position. We are quoting the relevant extract :

“Our eagerness to update the members in a hurry has caused an error in our message. We regret this in our communication which was due to truncation/mutation of the message resulting in conveying the same erroneously. However, it now seems the premium will be same as charged to the serving employees and officers for the year 2016-17. The final position is yet to emerge including domiciliary treatment reimbursement we regret for the inconvenience caused and the emotional set back our members had to undergo because of this miscommunication in email. We also request the banks to bear with the entire premium cost of retirees this will be a great gesture on the part of bank management”. Our members will surely appreciate the tremendous efforts given by the conveners of CBPRO in maintaining links with various authorities to protect the interest of the retirees. Although the desired result did not forthcome, genuine errors must be condoned.

6. The multi-million dollar question is : what next?

First, we require to do an exploration of truth. What quantum of money has been paid by the insurance company to the employees/officers against what quantum of money received by them as premium. Many may raise the question : is it our duty? Why the employer will not keep its commitment? Giving full respect to such queries, let us admit the unfortunate part that all the parties are now hapless toys in the hands of insurance companies and facts are to be countered with facts only. From figures available from circular of a major constituent of UFBU (not AIBOC), it appears that against an annual premium paid in 2015 for Rs.387 crore by various banks, the claims paid plus claims outstanding including domiciliary treatment is Rs.667 crores. The fallacy is that claims outstanding and claims settled cannot be the same and that the quantum of reimbursement of domiciliary expenses is not separately spelt out. Moreover, we are not very sure about authenticity of figures. It is strange to note that the figure as shown against a particular bank is different from what an employee has procured by following the mechanism of RTI. In the given situation, each affiliate is requested to procure the relevant figures from individual bank and we shall be striving to obtain the same from IBA. Secondly, another round of follow up with IBA, bureaucracy, power that be will continue. Thirdly, as per latest report available UFBU might be meeting with IBA on 26th of the month once again to discuss the issue. We shall be eagerly waiting for the outcome. Lastly, if no change of attitude is there, the meeting of the Governing Council in Kolkata will have to take stock of the entire situation and again might give a call to go to the streets. The very pertinent question that comes up is : what is the purpose of having the result of post mortem report when the man is dead. The answer is also known : our efforts for achieving the desired end will continue in a tireless manner. Result or no result – the struggle will not stop. It is the call of history of all ages.

With best wishes,

GENERAL SECRETARY