

**AN OPEN LETTER FROM
GENERAL SECRETARY
OF
UNITED BANK OF INDIA
EMPLOYEES' UNION**

As of now, at the stroke of 12 Midnight, today the 31st of March 2020 when the financial calendar will be ushering a new year, a premier institution of independent India named United Bank of India along with five other public sector banks will lose its official existence.

*This phenomenon will take place as per decision of the Government of India. The present Government is treating the public **sector** as the property of Government instead of the property of the Nation. That is why the Government is taking decisions for weakening/closure/privatization of the public sector institutions in a style quite similar to the era of Mohd. Bin Tughlaq.*

Since advent of New Economic Policy in 1991, as part of Reforms, the public sector institutions had been targeted for privatization adopting different tactics by all the Governments at the centre during the last three decades. Since then, the public sector banks faced many obstacles in its performance as a result of Reforms undertaken by successive Governments through its economic policies.

We consider that this merger move of ten public sector banks into four banks, which is popularly called as Mega Merger, is the highest offensive launched against public sector banks. We don't have any doubt that this consolidation of public sector banks is a prelude to privatization.

Most of the Federations operating in the banking industry, to our utter disappointment, failed to assess the reality. We, the unions of the banking industry, could not be united to oppose the move at one voice despite bitter experiences faced by the employees as well as customers consequent upon the recent amalgamations to form bigger entity in forms of erstwhile State Bank of India and Bank of Baroda.

**WE WILL REMAIN RESPONSIBLE
FOR ALL FUTURE DAMAGE TO
THE PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS AS
WELL AS OUR NATIONAL
ECONOMY SUBSEQUENT TO
MERGER.**

United Bank of India was formed in 1950 as a result of merger of four Banks of Bengal namely, Comilla Banking Corporation; Bengal Central Bank, Comilla Union Bank; Hooghly Bank. United Bank of India was never a bank of any industrialist, it was peoples' bank flourished with faith and money of common public.

On 19th July 1969, the Government of India nationalized United Bank of India, along with 13 other major Indian Commercial Banks with having deposits more than Rs 50 crore. At the time of nationalization, we had 174 branches which gradually rose to 2013 branches with pan India span.

During the period, United Bank of India faced several ups and downs in its journey of more than fifty years as a nationalized bank including threat of closure in the nineties. Depending upon love and affection of its customer base along with sincerity and perseverance of the common employees, United Bank of India sailed through all the turmoil came in the way.

**WE ALWAYS FELT
PROUD TO BE A
PART OF THIS
PREMIER
ORGANISATION.**

It is a notable feature that in all erstwhile four banks, prior to its merger to form United Bank of India, there were Unions. As a mark of magnificent sense of unity, all four unions merged themselves to form one Association. It was the beginning of trade union activities in the merged entity.

Starting with early 1950s to mid 1960s, the Association fought for rights and privileges for the employees in absence of industry level negotiated settlements. It was the era of Awards. The Association fought for implementation of the Awards as well as against some provisions of the Awards also. Notable of these were struggle to protect quantum of Dearness Allowance and for 'A' Class categorization instead of 'B' Class as decided by Sastry Award.

During the second half of 1970s discontents among the members started to grow centering round un-democratic functioning of the then Association leadership. On several issues a compromising attitude was also observed. Gradually freedom of expression was curtailed to suppress voices of opposition. At certain point of time a new organization was formed namely, United Bank of India Employees' Union in 1980. At that time it was not affiliated with any Federation.

The mode of functioning as was evident, in United Bank of India was somewhat similar in other banks too. In different banks discontent among the members started to form which ultimately culminated into formation of new organizations during the later part of seventies and early part of eighties. With majority of these organizations a national Federation in the name of Bank Employees Federation (BEFI) of India was formed in 1982. United Bank of India Employees' Union took affiliation of BEFI. A new journey of the bank employees with a definite ideological perspective began with the formation of BEFI.

**WE ARE ALL SAILING
WITH IDEOLOGICAL
OUTLOOK OF BEFI
EVER SINCE.**

In United Bank of India, our Union started functioning with a different viewpoint. Before the formation of United Bank of India Employees' Union, in our Bank there was no policy. All decisions were used to be taken by the management in consultation with the leadership of the undivided Association including Transfer-Posting. It was United Bank of India Employees' Union who demanded for initiation of policies. Some other unions including Officers' joined us in this struggle which ultimately forced the management to accept the demand. All the policies of our bank are dated later than 1982. It is not coincidence, but positive outcome of a long drawn struggle launched by United Bank of India Employees' Union.

During its long journey of almost four decades, United Bank of India Employees' Union under able leadership with support of dedicated members played vibrant role in bank employees' movement as well as democratic movement. In United Bank of India, our Union despite not being majority became deciding factor on any issue whatsoever due to principled stand it took.

United Bank of India Employees' Union had members in only a few States at the time of its formation. With democratic functioning and pro-employee approach, during the period, United Bank of India Employees' Union could spread its wings in as many as twenty one States and Union Territories. In some States we are major force, somewhere we are having significant presence and in few States our number is not much but in all places we could establish United Bank of India Employees' Union to be one different from the others by our functioning.

United Bank of India Employees' Union played an important role to form joint movement in our Bank. This effort started much before the formation of United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) at apex level.

We have already mentioned that in the initial days after formation UBIEU jointly with one officers' organization and one award staff organization fought for initiation of policy matters and negotiation status.

Only after the joint struggle policies started to be adopted in our bank.

Later, there was plenty of joint struggles of all the organizations in our bank against high handed actions of the management at different points of time.

In the 1990s, at the whims of the defaulting borrowers there was a conspiracy to wind up our beloved institution along with two other public sector banks. With glorious role played by all unions our bank was saved.

Of late, during more than a decade, there had been a series of joint movements in our bank including call for strike on two occasions by four award staff unions on different issues to protect the interest of our bank as well as the employees with much success. There was no doubt we remained the driving force of the joint movements in our bank.

United Bank of India Employees' Union has become a part of our lives. On many occasions it was proved beyond doubt that without Union, employees' rights and privileges neither could be achieved nor protected. It could be made possible due to immense devotion, dedication and sacrifices of our predecessors. We are enjoying many benefits which our seniors could not dream of but it is they who achieved these for us.

There is at least twenty years' age gap between the seniors and the younger people. There were similar gaps between the then senior leaders and the younger ones like me. But it never came in the way of working together. This togetherness gave me and other contemporaries an opportunity to be acquainted with ins and outs of trade union activities.

Tomorrow, United Bank of India Employees' Union would not cease to exist. It will continue its activities for some more time. Consequent upon the amalgamation, ultimately United Bank of India Employees' Union will also become history. It will remain in the history that the undersigned be the last General Secretary of this wonderful organization. I enjoyed every moment as the General Secretary with love, affection and respect shown to me by all. There were plenty of suggestions and advises which helped me to become as I am today. I shall always remain grateful.

There are many ex-members still associated with United Bank of India Employees' Union who devoted their precious time. United Bank of India has become a part of our soul, our identity. We can feel the pain. More painful is that in the present state of affairs none of us can meet each other; neither can we visit even our nearest branch. We could not be able to lodge our last protest.

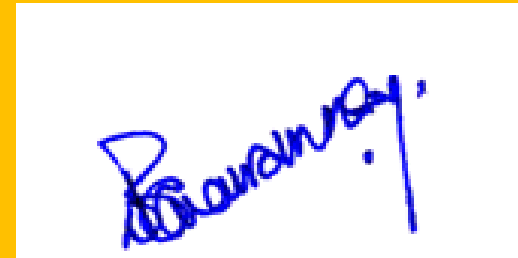
I understand the pain, the agony being experienced by a lot of employees and ex-employees of United Bank of India with this Amalgamation. We all are weeping inside. Still, even after demise of our closest ones we continue to live, give birth to next generation. This, exactly, is needed from us at the moment. We must continue our movements, teach our younger comrades for becoming a dedicated trade unionist.

In United Bank of India Employees' Union I became the first General Secretary to be recruited in the Bank from BSRB. I had a dream that someday the baton will be handed over to someone recruited from IBPS. In United Bank of India, this dream will never be a reality. But this is the ultimate truth and it will happen sooner or later, somewhere else if not here.

With deep wounds in our senses, our feelings as a result of the Amalgamation, we have to move forward in a new environment to face new challenges as crusaders of Bank Employees Federation of India. This will be our identity in future. The members, ex-members and all those associated with United Bank of India Employees' Union will remain as they are in the bigger family named Bank Employees Federation of India.

**WE'LL REMAIN
TOGETHER WITH
ALL OUR PRIDE
AND SELF RESPECT.**

With warm greetings



(DEBASISH BASU CHAUDHURY)

Kolkata, 31 March 2020