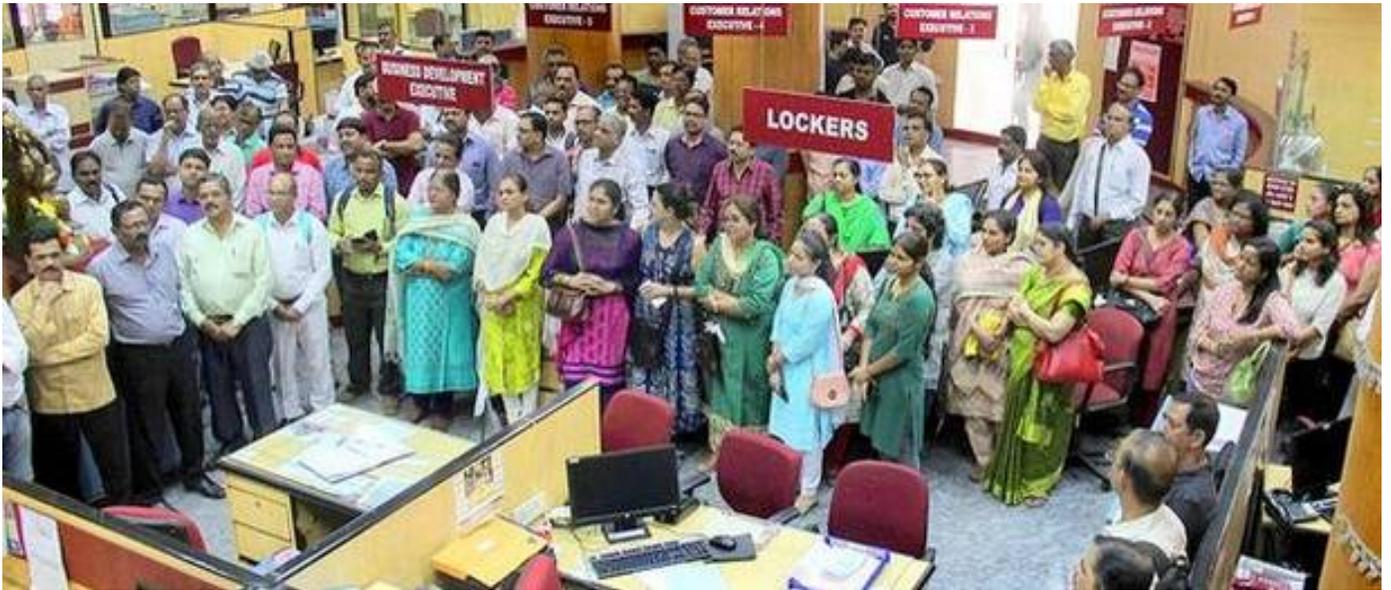


Staff of public sector banks keen to re-start wage talks

Surabhi Mumbai | Updated on July 21, 2019 Published on July 21, 2019

6



Officers' unions likely to stay away

Now that the general elections are over, wage negotiations for workmen of public sector banks could resume, but it is unclear whether the associations representing bank officers will also join the discussions. The proposal to link a part of the salary to performance and exclude senior scales from the negotiations continues to be a bone of contention.

“The officers’ unions have not been able to come. We have decided we can’t keep waiting. We are expecting the next meeting shortly; we will try to complete the negotiations,” said CH Venkatachalam, General Secretary, All India Bank Employees’ Association.

This would be a break from the recent rounds of bipartite wage talks, when negotiations involving all PSU bank staff (workmen and officers) took place collectively.

The IBA had proposed a 10 per cent hike. But the 11th bipartite wage talks between the Indian Banks' Association and unions of public sector bank employees and officers have been stalled since October last year due to a proposal to link a part of the variable component of the salary to the bank's performance. The wage hike will be put in place retrospectively from November 1, 2017.

Bank unions contend that the bonus component on top of the salary can be linked to the profit, but linking the variable to performance can adversely impact staff wages.

IBA's mandate curtailed

Unions have also pointed out that till now, member-banks had given the IBA the mandate to negotiate salary up to the General Manager cadre. But now, some banks have given the IBA mandate to negotiate only up to scale III, leaving officers in senior management in scales IV, V, VI and VII in 'no-man's land'.

About 14 banks have since then agreed to give a full mandate, but State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Union Bank of India, Bank of Baroda and Indian Bank are yet to agree.

"There has been a roadblock, as banks haven't given the mandate... officer service rule applies for all officers from scale I to scale VII," said Soumya Datta, General Secretary, All India Bank Officers' Confederation.

Four officers' organisations, including the AIBOC, the All India Bank Officers' Association, the Indian National Bank Officers' Congress and the National Organisation of Bank Officers also met IBA Chairman Sunil Mehta on these issues.

Wage settlement talks for workmen (clerical and subordinate staff) are likely to continue but Venkatachalam also stressed that there has to be a uniform average salary, which cannot be linked to profit.

The unions are also seeking better retirement and family pension benefits, bank holidays on all four Saturdays, and improved housing and leave benefits. “The overall hike is not as important if the entire package is improved with more retirement benefits and leave,” said a person familiar with the development.

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