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GENERAL SECRETARY**

**ALL INDIA UNION BANK PENSIONERS &
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14th July, 2016

Dear Comrades,

It was on 19th May, 2016 that Comrade Bihari Bhai, Founder President of our Organisation passed away at Ahmedabad. In fact, I was to release a detailed circular immediately after his sudden departure from this world but could not come to terms that he was no longer physically with us. I still feel that he is alive. I recall the regular telephone calls he used to make with the booming voice “Govinda” and enquire the developments in our Organisational activities or to share certain information that he may have received from other sources. His sources were far and wide and his circle of Comrades, Friends was very large.

It was only a few days before his demise that I got a call from Com. Bihari Bhai informing me that he and his team from Gujarat had booked train tickets for their journey to Chennai for attending the forthcoming Executive Committee meeting of our Federation. He informed me of the slight set back in his health and consequent hospitalization. However, he was exuding confidence that he would be alright – health wise and would be there at Chennai in July, 2016 as scheduled. With these things in the background, I am yet to come to terms that I would not get tele-calls from him and his booming voice over the phone would disappear so soon. But the fact remains that Com. Bihari Bhai is no more with us but his guidance for our Organisational activities would be available on a continuous basis. Perhaps he would be overseeing all of us from above and help us in taking this Organisation to the coveted position.

My association with Com Bihari Bhai started way back in early 1980s when I became active in the Tamil Nadu State Unit of Officers' movement. By that time, Com. Bihari Bhai was a well know Trade Unionists as he was initially the General Secretary of the Employees' Union and later with his promotion to Officers' cadre, he became the General Secretary of the Officers' Association of Gujarat Unit. He was also active in Officers' movement in the Banking Industry, having been associated in the formation of AIBOC. He was a popular leader in the Trade Union movement of Banking Industry in the State of Gujarat and he started emerging as a leader of Officers' movement at the National level.

He was the Architect of Union Bank Employees' Co-op. Thrift and Credit Society, Gujarat and within a short period of existence, he managed to secure the premises for it, by managing the affairs of the Society very effectively and efficiently. He was successful in securing a flat for the Officers' Association of Gujarat.

Slowly and steadily, he rose in stature as an All India leader in our Officers movement and his booming voice was heard with rapt attention by everyone. He was very articulate and

could put forth his views in a very lucid and simple style but at the same time in a very effective manner that the leadership could not brush aside his views and opinions. Soon he was a permanent member of the All India body whatever meetings, be it I.R. meetings or otherwise. with the Central Management. He also became very visible at the Industry level by being closely associated with the leadership of AIBOC.

Perhaps it will be right for me to recall the turbulent days of our Federation during 1995-97 when our organizational existence was threatened by the Management. I would like to record that Com. Bihari Bhai was always with the leadership in its fight against the Management.

Com. Bihari Bhai took up the mantle of President of our Federation in 1997 and with Com. Sarkar as the General Secretary, he steered the affairs of the Federation successfully. Our Bank Management took vindictive action against three key leaders of the Federation and he along with Com.P.K.Sarkar and late Com.N.P.Dalal, resolved the serious and knotty issues to the reasonable satisfaction of the affected leaders. I cannot forget those worrisome days.

He continued as President till his superannuation in 2002. His tenure from 1997 to 2002 witnessed the success of the Federation in many spheres, notable among them being smooth working with the Management, Introduction of many Staff Welfare schemes, Nomination of Officer Representatives to Staff Welfare Committee. Promotion processes were also regularly conducted and the Federation was consulted by the Management on all pertinent issues. It was my good luck that I succeeded Com. Bihari Bhai as the President of the Federation in 2002 that too in the General Body meeting held at Ahmedabad to bid farewell to him. I feel I was always blessed by Com. Bihari Bhai and I pray that he will continue to do so.

I have always admired the sterling qualities of Com. Bihari Bhai – his leadership style - even to some extent authoritarian, facile communication, breezy conversation with the rank and file, successful negotiation with the Management on critical issues, willingness to come to terms with others. These are some of the qualities and I am sure my Comrades will come out with many more. His commitment to leadership on matters already decided was unparalleled. True to the directive of the Federation, he remained as an Officer in Junior Management Grade Scale till his retirement and he never regretted that position.

Coming to his farsightedness, I wish to recall that he was the first in our Bank to expound that the link with the Retirees should be continued even after they leave the Bank and was instrumental in starting the Forum of Associate Life Members – Retirees as part of the Officers' Association of our Gujarat Unit. Again, he was the first to conduct meetings, arrange get-together programmes for the Retirees so that the continuity with them is maintained. He was able to introduce many welfare schemes for the Retirees years ago when no one was able to even comprehend such concepts. The Forum of Associate Life Members in Gujarat is an active Organisation with substantial corpus. He was also a pioneer in starting a monthly Newsletter – Union Sandesh for his State Unit.

It was Com. Bihari Bhai who prevailed upon Com. Sarkar and the leadership of AIBOC to form an Organisation of Retirees at the Industry level and thus was born All India Union Bank Pensioners & Retirees Federation and All India Bank Pensioners & Retirees Confederation – AIBPARC. He became the Founder President of our Federation and the Founder Deputy General Secretary of AIBPARC. I had the fortune of attending certain meetings of AIBPARC and could observe the felicity with which Com. Bihari Bhai put forth

his views on matters of interest and his views and opinions were listened with rapt attention. He was in the forefront in all our activities and that of AIBPARC.

The sudden passing away of Com. Bihari Bhai has left a deep void in our Organisation and the question that arises is who will replace the irreplaceable? How do we find another Comrade of his stature and commitment?

I am at a personal loss with his demise and I do not know to whom I will consult whenever I confront certain intractable problems. However, I am sure all our Comrades would help me in my efforts.

The greatness of this man is measured by the promise made by him while he was alive not to have his mortal body consigned to flames but to donate it for medical research, a rare step taken by a devout Gujarati Hindu family. Hats off to all the family members and in particular his wife, who had marital bliss with Com. Bihari Bhai for more than 49 years for fulfilling his promise. His hospitality to those who visited Ahmedabad was phenomenal.

Never will it be easy to find another person like Com. Bihari Bhai. Let us pray that God should give enough strength to his family. Let us pray "May His Soul rest in peace".

It takes a minute to find special persons, an hour to appreciate them, and a day to love them, but it takes an entire lifetime to forget them.

—Anonymous

RED SALUTE TO THE MEMORIES OF COM. BIHARI PATEL

THANK YOU

N. GOVINDARAJULU