

FINANCE MINISTER PUSHES FOR REGIONAL LANGUAGES IN INDIAN BANKING

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Sitharaman was speaking on Thursday at the virtual launch of a uniform training programme, including modules on preventive vigilance, for induction and mid-level training for officers of public sector banks (PSBs)

Mumbai: Indian state-owned lenders should consider focusing on regional languages for better customer service, especially in areas where people are not conversant with Hindi, said finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Sitharaman was speaking on Thursday at the virtual launch of a uniform training programme, including modules on preventive vigilance, for induction and mid-level training for officers of public sector banks (PSBs).

She said that while banking recruitments allow candidates from across the country to join, there is a need for bankers to know the local language of area they are posted in.

"In some pockets where Hindi does not work, we need to have a cadre of people who will have to understand the language of the state in which their first posting happens," said Sitharaman.

She said that officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) learn the language of the state cadre to which they get attached to and the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) also allows their cadres to choose one foreign language.

"After all, if we want to compare ourselves to an all-India service, language is one of the things on which focus has to be given," said Sitharaman, adding that it is important for new recruits to voluntarily decide on one regional language in which they would want to specialise.

If you choose Hindi, very well, but if it is some other language, he or she should ideally be given an exposure in the state where that language is spoken, she said.

"Of course, in the long-run this will have a bearing on recruitments also," she added.

The minister said bankers recruited from a particular state, should as much as possible, be deployed in that state. In case there is a surplus from that state, recruits can be moved to any other state.

"If they are unable to speak the language, it is not an all-India service at all," said Sitharaman.

She explained that not being able to communicate in the local language strikes a discordant note, since at the branch level, bankers are constantly in touch with customers.

"We cannot impose a particular language on them (customers). After all they are dealing in their own money and coming to you (bank) for business and if we cannot communicate with them like the way they should be, that will be a big handicap in our service," the minister told bankers, adding that banking services need to be professional, robust and sensitive to the people whose money it is handling.

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