

STATE BANK OF INDIA OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

(BENGAL CIRCLE)

(Registered under Trade Unions Act 1926-Regd. No. 6908)

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IP No. 500077

Circular No. 128/2020

Date : 15.07.2020

To All Members (Please Circulate)

We reproduce hereunder the Circular No. 100 dated 15.07.2020 issued by the General Secretary, All India State Bank Officers' Federation, the contents of which are self-explicit.

With revolutionary greetings,

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay
(General Secretary)

To all our Affiliates / Members:

Covid-19 pandemic: Growing cases of infection among SBI employees Compliance of SOP guidelines for Safety and Security of Employees

We have sent a communication to the Chief General Manager (HR) State Bank of India, on the captioned subject.

A copy is enclosed for information.

Yours comradely,

(Soumya Datta)
General Secretary

No. 6466/54/20

Date: 14/07/2020

The Chief General Manager (HR)
State Bank of India,
Corporate Centre,
Madam Cama Road,
Mumbai 400021

Dear Sir,

Covid-19 pandemic: Growing cases of infection among SBI employees Compliance of SOP guidelines for Safety and Security of Employees

We appreciate the concerns expressed in your communication addressed to the various Circle heads and Departmental heads in this regard. We believe it is in effect a manifestation of laxity in some Circles in regard to compliance of advisories issued by the bank and Central and various state governments. We have been regularly highlighting the issues related to the ongoing pandemic and our repeated exhortations now stand vindicated, when we see the emerging reality faced by all. As has been stated in the advisory, the spread of infections are spiraling in number and information reaching from various circles shows that many of our colleagues getting infected is on the record surge every day and some of them in groups and clusters. In addition, the cases of mortality are also rising steadily and we have been informed of the demise of quite a few of our colleagues and their family members, which is extremely demoralising. We are deeply perturbed and apprehend that the situation is likely to deteriorate for the worse in the coming months.

2. We wish to highlight some of the critical issues and concerns being faced by our members at this critical juncture for suitable action at your end.

- In most establishments across the country the guidelines and SOPs issued by Corporate Centre/Governments (both State and Central) are not being adhered to, either in letter or in spirit. There could be multiple reasons for it; the foremost being the lack of unified command and/or arbitrary and half-hearted measures by the controllers due to ignorance, misinterpretation and communication gaps or misplaced priorities.
- Though, the advisory has unambiguously stressed on the need to avoid physical meetings, the feedback from ground zero reveals that it has failed at the stage of implementation. Such meetings have not been discontinued yet at controlling office level. Feedback received from Circles indicate that P-Review meetings are being held across the country in conference hall with more than 25/30 people. It is reported that several officers, including Regional Managers and executives, have been infected subsequently. As per the experts, Covid-19 droplets in the air conditioned room could be transmitted more easily to people in the room, even when those who are socially distanced.

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay
General Secretary
Mobile : 9434551152

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- c. The sanitization of premises is not being done regularly as is necessary at establishments. This aggravates the proliferation of infection as ATMs/branches are public places and potential hotspots. Contact tracing has revealed that in a significant number of cases, the infected persons had visited our outfits. The basic amenities like masks/sanitiser/face shields are not being provided to the operating functionaries as and when there is a need to supply those items and there is perceptible lack of supervision and monitoring hygiene at all establishments including CSPs.
- d. In most rural and semi urban branches, there is a surge in number of customers during Unlock 1.0 and Unlock 2.0 and outfits/branches are flooded with customers. The basic norms of social distancing, wearing masks etc. are not adhered to, rather impossible to adhere to since there is often very little support from the local administration to control the crowd. Such branches are likely hotspots for spread of the contagion. We suggest deployment of security personnel/contractual workers in such places to restrict entry and ensure thermal screening, sanitisation etc.
- e. There is perceptible reluctance to reduce the working hours/implementation of alternate day or rotation in LHO/AOs/RBOs and branches even at the backdrop of record spike in fresh cases every day. It is pertinent to mention that RBI has curtailed trading hours for various markets to ensure safety of personnel. We understand that such decision has been vested with controllers who seldom take a decision in this regard. However, as mentioned earlier, there is palpable lack of command and decision making ability. We understand that our Corporate Centre is functioning with 33% operating functionaries and has enforced alternate work for the personnel, a very beneficial initiative at this trying time. A clear cut advisory should be issued to Circles to implement such measures to reduce the probability of spreading contamination by 'breaking the chain'. Feedback on the extent of implementation of the advisories from the Circles be obtained and reviewed.
- f. There is reluctance in ensuring even mandatory 14 day period of quarantine for personnel whenever an employee/official/contractual worker in the branch is found infected and have come in close contact with the operating personnel. Employees/officials are being compelled to report after couple of days of quarantine, if they do not show any symptoms of the disease or are tested negative. It is common knowledge that the incubation period of SARS-Cov-2 virus varies from person to person and generally surfaces between 2 and 14 days from exposure. Yet, personnel are pressurized to resume duty earlier than the mandatory period of quarantine. This will surely enhance the risk of spread of infection as studies have revealed that asymptomatic carriers are largely spreading the virus in the community. We also note with concern that despite clear cut guidelines for exempting Divyangjan/V.I./Pregnant women/employees with co-morbidities/serious health concerns, some Circles are not granting exemptions to such personnel.
- g. Respective Circles should work in tandem with the state administration to conduct RT-PCR tests for employees/officials/contractual workers etc. in hotspot areas and large establishments at regular intervals so as to "Detect, Isolate and Treat".
- h. Feedback indicates that quarantining/treatment facility is grossly inadequate and our officers are not able to access such facility.
- i. Despite tie-ups with several health care centres across the country, our officers are finding it extremely difficult to get admission during crisis for self and family members. This needs to be addressed immediately as several incidents have been reported across the country, where precious lives have been lost for lack of medical care at appropriate time.
- j. Many controllers are compelling officers to canvas for YONO product/Society-Connect, third party products during this period when there is an exponential increase in the number of affected persons across the country. Visitors are not welcome in housing complexes and both the officers & people hesitate to touch the device of the other or coming in close contact. Such campaigns, which require close proximity, sharing of device puts the health of both in jeopardy. We are constrained to say that, unfortunately many have become insensitive and are creating undue pressure, under the guise of achieving target to fare well in MD's ranking parameters. Officers are being instructed to go out for business canvassing even in this pandemic when Government has been advocating otherwise. There have been misplaced priorities at this critical juncture. We strongly suggest either to change parameters in MD Ranking or suspend the same temporarily as it has an adverse impact on the morale and commitment of the work force. The focus can be shifted to compliance, house-keeping, follow-up, which can definitely help bank to reduce the operational risk and reduce NPAs.

Sir, it is a fact that that fear is seeping in our employees and officials with the steep rise in number of infections amongst our employees/officials. Personnel are hesitant to touch even the papers for the fear of fomite infection. Our bank has lauded and appreciated the effort of our personnel, who have been rendering yeoman service ever since the Lockdown 1.0 was announced despite such constraints. Several avant-garde welfare oriented measures have been initiated by the Bank in this critical period. There is a dire necessity of morale-boosting measures to motivate the personnel by ensuring safety and hygiene and emotional support.

We, therefore, earnestly request you to give due cognizance to the issues raised in the foregoing and also the cogent suggestions incorporated. We urge upon your good office to ensure that the people entrusted with decision making at all levels take the threat of the pandemic seriously and ensure strict adherence to the SOPs and guidelines. Any laxity on this score should be treated with zero-tolerance.

Stay safe, stay healthy

With regards,

Yours sincerely,



(Soumya Datta)
General Secretary

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay
General Secretary
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