

STATE BANK OF INDIA OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

(BENGAL CIRCLE)

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

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Circular No. 139/2020

Date : 04.08.2020

To All Members

ISSUES CONFRONTING OFFICERS

NON-ADHERENCE TO THE SOP OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC AT BRANCHES/ OFFICES

We have sent a communication to the Deputy General Manager & CDO on the captioned subject.

A copy is enclosed for information.

Your comradely,

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay
(General Secretary)

The Deputy General Manager & CDO,
State Bank of India,
Local Head Office, Kolkata- 700 001

No. 14/56

Date: 04.08.2020

Dear Sir,

ISSUES CONFRONTING OFFICERS

NON-ADHERENCE TO THE SOP OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC AT BRANCHES/ OFFICES

We take immense pride of the fact that our Bank by its own culture and custom has a tradition of more than 200 years of serving the people of the country. Being the premier financial institution of the country, our Bank is always in the forefront by rendering yeoman service to the nation. We sincerely appreciate for the various safety measures/initiatives taken by our Bank for the employees as well as customers. The exemplary and path breaking HR initiatives of the bank at this critical uncertainty have definitely boosted the employees to take a key role in combating the deadly COVID-19. As responsible citizen of the country, the officers are rendering banking service to the customers across the circle shouldering the risk of being exposed to the deadly virus.

02. But we are constrained to bring the following facts for your information and initiating suitable measures to address the situation in right perspective:

- a) That an Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been devised by the Corporate Centre to combat the killer virus of COVID-19, but it has been observed with grave concern that the SOP is not being adhered to in toto. As per instructions and advisory of Corporate Centre and SLBC, branches/ offices have to be operated with restricted number of employees, but this is not at all being followed in branches. At this critical time, when government establishments are functioning with minimal staff, bank officers are compelled to attend branches/offices to keep the wheels of the economy moving risking their lives. Even, alternate day working facility has not been extended to the outsourced people who also commuting office for their livelihood. Sir, you are aware that working in office on alternate day was initially introduced for the officers upto Scale-IV, but as per latest instruction it is now applicable upto Scale –II in LHO/AO/RBO, when the surge of contamination is going to reach its peak. We feel that alternate day working should be applicable to all officers irrespective of Grade/Scale, branches, processing centres and administrative offices. 'Alternate Day' working is nothing but one of the safety measure recommended by bank authority as well as GOI to 'Break the Chain' and is not only inimical to the safety and security of all employees and officers of the banks but would also lead to multiplied chances of contamination to themselves and their family members. Thus, it should be implemented irrespective of all employees rather designation-wise; otherwise it may defeated the basic concepts of 'social distancing' and 'break the chain'. Incidentally, State Level Bankers' Committees (SLBCs) vide their memo no.

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay

General Secretary

Mobile : 9434551152

State Bank of India Officers' Association

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: 2 :

SLBC (WB)/190/2020 dated 20.07.2020 have announced a series of measures with an aim to combat COVID-19 which includes:

Restriction in the number of employees on duty.
Strict social distancing norms,

The Reserve Bank of India has also instructed its employees to work from home. We are expecting similar measures to be initiated by our bank to protect all of our employees, not by choosing designation wise, to minimize the chances of exposure. Employees should be redeployed in such a manner that the number of staff gathered on any particular day does not exceed the norm of 'barest minimum', because such events will defeat the very aspect of 'social distancing', which is a dire necessity in the present scenario.

- b) Secondly, we have definite information that meeting/ seminars have been conducted by the local controllers in some hotels and other places and unfortunately after conducting such meeting/ seminar, branch officials even controller have been infected by the deadly virus. We have already lost one officer in a branch and before this irreparable loss, meeting was organized at that place where number of officers participated from different branches were exposed and some of them were infected by the pandemic COVID-19. Officers having co morbidity like cancer ailment are called for attending office during this time. Controllers/ Regional Managers and HR department of concerned RBOs are reluctant to give proper attention in this matter.
- c) Thirdly, we have also noticed the infrastructure of some branches particularly in RACCs are in a deplorable condition. While some are operating without total lack of infrastructure, some are operating either with insufficient and/or poor infrastructure. Many such establishments are cramped for space having only a single entry/exit door where officers are forced to sit very closed to each other compromising 'social distancing'. Officers are conducting inspection of units and coming back to office without being sanitized properly; customers are found waiting in such small rooms for execution of loan documents which are exchanged without sanitization and fumigation. Even there is no thermal scanning of visitors entering the bank premises. The situation creates a very unhealthy working environment and ultimately these RACCs turn to be a Corona Hotspot.
- d) The officers on being attacked by the deadly virus are facing social ostracisation. We have definite information that officers who are residing in leased accommodation are being threatened to vacate the same after being infected by the deadly virus. They are at a loss to find a new shelter due to social stigma. In this context, we are citing an instance that one of our lady officers posted in North Bengal had been residing in a leased accommodation. She was tested COVID positive and being asymptomatic, she was supposed to take medical treatment staying at home. Unfortunately, she was forcefully admitted to hospital by her landlord with the help of some neighbor. Her husband along with four (4) years old daughter both being tested negative were forced by the land lord to stay at quarantine center. Local management is not paying proper attention to this issue. Moreover, non-availability of bed in the Hospital with which tie-up arrangement has been made by bank is creating another problem of admission. The infected officers have to stay at the locally managed 'Safe Home' arranged by the local Panchayat or Block Office which are unhygienic and unhealthy. We again urge upon your good office to direct the appropriate authorities to provide adequate security to the bank branches and also to take stern actions against the perpetrators of such dastardly acts. We also request your good self to issue necessary directions to the banks to review the security arrangements prevalent in the branches to thwart such kind of heinous attack on the bankers.
- e) It is very disheartening to note that the little baby of the officer who recently succumbed to the deadly virus has also been tested COVID Positive. Unfortunately, they are not entitled to get reimbursement of such treatment from the bank. It is a pity that when an officer during his lifetime contributed to the development of this great institution, after his untimely death in the line of duty, his family is rendered helpless. We feel it will be a humanitarian act, if bank takes the responsibility of medical expenses for this little child. The incident referred above is not an isolated instance.
- f) It has also come to our notice that officers/ Branch Managers after discharging their duties in working days without enjoying the alternate day work in office are called upon through webinar meeting on Sundays/ holidays. At times they have to attend three non-stop meetings on Sundays/ holidays depriving them to maintain Work Life Balance. At this unprecedented situation, our officers are coming back to their family on Sunday/ holiday at least to provide some sorts of weekly assistance like appointment with doctor and other essential services but their basic need to spare a single day with family are being snatched by the controllers.

03. Sir, we are aware that business development is the need of the hour, however, safety and well-being of the officers' community cannot be compromised. So, it is our earnest request to bestow proper attention to the above noted issues and initiative appropriate steps to boost the morale of our workforce who are performing to the best of their ability despite constraints. Let us work in unison to carry forward the legacy of this esteemed organization which has been displaying a leading role to the entire banking industry.

"Stay Safe, Stay Healthy."

With regards,

Sd/-
(Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay)
General Secretary

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay

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Mobile : 9434551152