

STATE BANK OF INDIA OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

(BENGAL CIRCLE)

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

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Circular No. 35/2022

Date : 04.03.2022

To All Members (Please Circulate)

We reproduce hereunder the Circular No. 15 dated 19.02.2022 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)

Dear Comrades,

MISINFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

An RTI reply purportedly issued by our Bank is doing rounds on social media related to lunch hours in the Bank for officers and award staff. The RTI applicant (identity unknown) has specifically asked for some circular/instructions in this regard. The CPIO under Section 2(f) of the act has to share the information, which would mean **anything which exists** in any form with a public authority, and the public authority is not entitled to give its opinion. As such, the reply to the RTI stated that 'no such information is available on record', in respect of officers of the Bank, which a fact in black and white is. But in consonance with the age-old convention and established practices followed over the years, the time for lunch break has been customized for officers and now it has been made more flexible than ever.

02. However, this RTI reply has been purposively misconstrued to generate negativity amongst the officers and other stakeholders that officers are not entitled to any lunch break. There is no instance incidence in the bank since 1955 that officers have been denied lunchtime or action taken by the bank for going to the canteen/Officers' Mess during banking hours for taking lunch. Apparently, the RTI reply document has been deliberately tampered with malafide intent by the person(s) with vested interest to belittle our esteemed institution and our Federation by sharing on social media platforms. The letter has have been tampered with which appears to be the handiwork of certain person(s) with an ulterior motive.

03. In view of the extent of responsibility and nature of work, let us understand that there are no fixed lunch hours for supervisory cadre in the entire banking industry because of the extant service conditions and also because of the fact that unlike workmen, who enjoy the protection granted under various statutes of the country, officers, on the other hand, do not have regulated working hours.

04. The very fact that officers do not have fixed duty hours implies that we are free to take lunch break anytime, as per our convenience. Thus, the RTI reply should be rightfully inferred as – 'Bank officers can have lunch at any time as per their convenience. Neither has anybody denied us from having lunch during office hours nor anybody can deny us from having lunch anytime during the day. It is a matter of our right to life, protected under Article 21 of the constitution.

"The fundamental right to life enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution may be interpreted to include the right to live with human dignity, which may include the right to food and other basic necessities", held a bench of Supreme Court on 29th July 2021.

05. Accordingly, the Bank has provided designated Officers' mess/ Lunch Clubs at several Regional and Administrative Offices and at all Head Offices and Corporate Offices. It is pertinent to note that the Bank provides for subsidized food through its welfare funds allocated to employees. All official meetings (extending through the day, like P-reviews, structured meetings, etc.), training programmes for officers conducted at training institutes have lunch breaks.

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay

General Secretary
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06. It thus appears that the intent of 'misinterpretation' of a specific RTI reply is nothing but an attempt to sully the image of the Bank with a premeditated motive to demean and damage the dignity of bank officers apart from the fact of their mal intention of generating cheap publicity. As responsible officers of the Bank, we should not form any adverse opinion based on such contorted social media communications to demoralize the workforce/ officers.

07. Incidentally, our demand for regulated working hours for bank officers has continuously been flagged and discussed at appropriate forums. This issue was part of our Charter of Demands during the last wage negotiations and is very much alive in our further negotiations with IBA/ Government. Our struggle for achieving regulated working hours for our members will continue until we triumph.

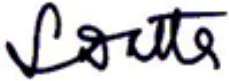
08. In this regard, we would also like to share that as per the fundamental Conventions of the International Labour Organization (popularly known as Geneva Conventions), the supervisory cadre in commercial or trading establishments should be entitled to regulated work hours. India has not yet ratified 2 out of the 8 fundamental conventions of ILO. The ratification of these conventions would involve granting certain rights that are prohibited under the statutory rules, for the supervisory cadre employees. As many South Asian nations have also ratified the fundamental ILO conventions, we are confident that India is a founding member, would soon ratify the remaining fundamental conventions.

09. Till such time it is taken to a logical conclusion, our struggle will continue for regulated working hours for supervisory cadre, which will certainly see the light of the day.

This is a classic example of creating problems for a solution, therefore, we urge upon our Affiliates and members not to assign any cognizance to such letters/messages circulated on social media.

With greetings,

Yours Comradely,



(Soumya Datta)
General Secretary

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay

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