

STATE BANK OF INDIA OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

(BENGAL CIRCLE)

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

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Circular No. 138/2023

Date : 29.08.2023

To All Members (Please Circulate)

We reproduce hereunder the Circular No. 65 dated 29.08.2023 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)

FOSTERING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR EMPLOYEES' EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

We have sent a communique to the Chairman, State Bank of India, on the captioned subject, emphasizing the value of creating a welcoming atmosphere that takes into account each employee's emotional wellbeing.

We firmly believe that a supportive environment is not only the responsibility of the management but also a shared objective. We must all strive together to make SBI a shining example of teamwork and corporate welfare in our individual roles and objectives. We can make SBI known for being a model workplace as well as for its financial prowess through our combined efforts. Let's be the architects of such a legacy.

Please find the attached letter for your perusal and action. Let us work together sincerely, aligning with the organization's objectives and have the long-lasting effect we seek.

Divided we fall; united we stand. Make our federation and bank something to be proud of forever.

#OurUnityLongLive

With revolutionary greetings,

Yours Comradely,

Sd/-

(Deepak Kumar Sharma)

General Secretary

No. 6810/44/23

Dated: 25.08.2023

The Chairman
State Bank of India
Corporate Centre
Mumbai.

Respected Sir,

Fostering a Supportive Environment for Employees' Emotional Well-being We are reaching out to you today, burdened with heavy hearts and consumed by deep sorrow, in the wake of a series of tragic events that have unfolded within the ranks of our prestigious institution. The distressing news about several suicides committed by

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay

General Secretary

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our bank colleagues highlighted in the media has sent shockwaves throughout the community. Prominently featured in print and electronic media, these solemn incidents are unsettling and alarming. The headlines in newspapers and media reports disseminated through platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp depict a troubling image of our Bank. This portrayal, which highlights a toxic work culture, tarnishes the bank's reputation and breeds dissatisfaction, frustration, and demotivation among our staff.

2. Even though there may be several factors causing these tragic events, some may be due to mental health problems arising out of external issues. There are few other underlying causes such as traumatic experiences, complex personal, professional, financial, or health issues, or even medication side effects. However, when these occurrences are linked to workplace stress or the toxic culture within the bank, every officer starts to resonate with these worries because these issues are common across the bank in varying degrees. Therefore, it is crucial that we call your attention to specific problems and provide honest feedback because they seem to be a significant factor in triggering these tragic events.

3. Our communication with you serves not only to convey our genuine concern but also to foster a spirit of collaboration and mutual responsibility to tackle the menace. The harmful practices in some pockets within some circles are not a reflection of our organization but rather the regrettable actions of a minority. Our intention is not to cast blame on anyone but to collaboratively address areas of improvement.

4. It is worth acknowledging that challenges of various natures are pervasive and transcend geographical boundaries. Whenever such distressing incidents occur, officers from all walks of our organization may find these issues resonating with them. We firmly believe in the resilience and ethical foundations of our management, it is also essential to recognize that the underlying practices, which might contribute to these incidents even the slightest by specific individuals, will be thoroughly examined and rectified.

5. Establishing robust systems and policies that foster a harmonious work environment, penalize misconduct, and effectively address our valued employees' grievances is paramount. You will also appreciate that our institution's success hinges not merely on profits and performance but on the well-being, dignity, and respect afforded to our employees. Together, we must cultivate a culture that cherishes human life and pursues excellence through adherence to ethical principles and practices.

6. Our branches/offices are grappling with a significant staff shortage, which has given us an atmosphere characterized by overwhelming pressure, intense competition, unattainable targets, and heightened expectations. The unrelenting drive to achieve short-term objectives, expedited promotions, inconsistent transfer policies, an excessive emphasis on cross-selling, and the adoption of detrimental tactics to meet targets have collectively contributed to an environment that is taking a toll on our dedicated employees' mental and emotional well-being. The relentless pursuit of the top position across all MD ranking parameters by some controllers is also eroding the fundamental principles of our esteemed institution where we feel there is an urgent need to strike a balance.

7. We have reports that the instances of flagrant misconduct by a handful of senior bankers, marked with derogatory language and public humiliation, have instilled a fear psychosis among officers down the line. Regrettably, these incidents are not isolated incidents with junior staff but rather stark indicators of a deep-seated crisis within our organization since senior officers are also being treated unfairly by a few top executives. We believe every individual should be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace, and these harmful, contagious behaviors must be promptly addressed and eradicated.

8. The issuance of Circular on work-life balance vide no. CDO/P&HRD/IR/54/2017-18 dated 30/10/2017 was indeed a commendable step that resonated positively across the nation. Sadly, not all levels have fully embraced this circular's good intent. In many RBOs/AOs/LHOs, there is still a bad habit of staying late, and officers who leave even at 7.30 or 8 pm are unfairly called "shirkers." Officers are unfairly expected to work on Sundays and other holidays, which interferes with their family and personal time and undermines their ability to carry out their jobs with respect and dignity.

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9. Sir, it is imperative that we take immediate and decisive action to address these issues before they cause irreparable damage. We must ensure that our organization reflects compassion, empathy and mutual respect. The culture of unwarranted verbal bashing, unrealistic demands, and public disgracing of colleagues must end.

10. As a responsible federation, dedicated to the interests and welfare of our members and with unwavering loyalty to our beloved SBI, we consistently advocate for our shared concerns at every relevant level, in concert with our affiliates. Last year, the Chief General Manager (HR) adroitly articulated our collective concerns and frustrations at the grassroots level, dispatching a meticulously crafted communique to all circles. This gesture symbolized a sincere resolve to eradicate this unsettling trend. Reinforcing our efforts, the Deputy Managing Director (HR) & CDO has commendably initiated steps towards rectification by advising Controllers to abandon this disgraceful mode of operation. Though there has been tangible progress, more needs to be done to fully preserve and honour the distinguished legacy of our great organization.

11. Considering the above, we respectfully request your consideration and support in the following measures:

- Establishment of a Counseling and Support Cell: A dedicated cell within the organization to provide psychological support and counseling to employees dealing with stress or pressure across all LHOs.
- Review of Work Practices: Conducting a comprehensive review of current work practices, targets, and pressures. It is need of the hour to ensure a balanced approach that prioritizes well-being of employees and adherence to ethical practices.
- Strict Action against Unethical Behavior: Implementing a zero tolerance policy against bullying, harassment, or any form of mental torment by superiors. Strict disciplinary action must be taken without delay if any senior is found guilty of such behavior.
- Training and Awareness Programs: Organizing regular workshops and training sessions to sensitize employees about mental health, work ethics, and proper communication.
- Enhanced Communication: A transparent and open channel of communication between the management and employees to foster a relationship built on trust, respect, and mutual understanding.
- Transparent Grievance Redressal Mechanism: Sanjeevani is a portal developed by the Bank in the right spirit but it is proving counterproductive as the complaints by staff in Sanjeevani lead to their harassment at the hands of their controllers or officials who are the cause for such complaints. It is imperative to ensure a robust and transparent grievance redressal mechanism, allowing employees to voice concerns without fear of reprisal.
- Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability: With all operations being networked, our esteemed Bank has the capability to monitor certain undesirable activities at the apex level, be it at the Circle level or the Corporate Centre level. We strongly recommend keeping track of recurrent late sittings and continuing working on off days at various Branch/RBO levels, and in all such cases, calling for a report from the concerned controllers. This measure can serve as a significant deterrent and an opportunity for introspection and reform.

12. Sir, we firmly believe that you, as our distinguished leader, will hear our plea and take appropriate measures to ensure the dignity, respect, and humane treatment of our fellow colleagues. We trust that under your wise guidance and unwavering commitment to our shared values, we can work together to build an SBI that stands tall, not just as an economic behemoth but as a nurturing and compassionate institution that values its people above all else.

We earnestly seek your kind intervention in this matter and look forward to your prompt and decisive action.

With deepest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

(Deepak K Sharma)

General Secretary

Shubhajyoti Chattopadhyay

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