

# ALL INDIA BANK OFFICERS' CONFEDERATION

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Circular No. 2020/36

Date:31.03.2020

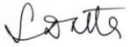
## To All Affiliates (Please Circulate)

Dear Comrade,

### **Bankers forced to deviate from 'Break the Chain'- AIBOC expresses strong resentment**

We have sent a communiqué to the Secretary, Department of Financial Services vide our letter no. AIBOC/2020/20 dated 31.03.2020 on the captioned subject. Copy of the same has also been sent to the Chairman of SBI and MD&CEOs of all banks. Text of the communication is appended.

With greetings,

  
(Soumya Datta)  
General Secretary

**Text of Letter No. AIBOC/2020/20 dated 31.03.2020**

Ref No. AIBOC/2020/20

Date: 31.03.2020

Shri Debasish Panda  
Secretary  
Department of Financial Services  
Ministry of Finance  
Government of India  
New Delhi

Dear Sir,

### **Bankers forced to deviate from 'Break the Chain' AIBOC expresses strong resentment**

We note with consternation that some of the State Level Bankers' Committees (SLBCs) and a few banks have made certain irrational and insensitive revision in the guidelines on functioning of branches / offices during the period of COVID-19 endemic, forcing all the officers and employees to attend their duties even when the lockdown announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister is on throughout the country and public transport services including suburban and metro railways are not operational.

It has come to our notice that in view of the 'Coronavirus Relief Package' announced by the Finance Ministry for providing financial support to the economically weaker section of the society, farmers and women beneficiaries under various schemes, diverse guidelines are being issued by different authorities:

1. Most of the SLBCs as well as Management of certain banks have directed that all branches should continue to function normally. We strongly feel that in the present scenario, it would be a welcome step to continue opening of only minimal number of branches. This will enable the bank staff – who have already been facing the situation of non-availability of transport facilities and payment of exorbitant sum to the transport operators in the wake of universal lockdown and instructions under Sec 144 of CrPC / Curfew – to attend their duties and extend the minimum essential services in line with the latest IBA directive bearing no. SB/Cir/COVID-19/2019-20/8881 issued on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020, besides implementing the schemes and measures announced by the Hon'ble FM to render service to the community. We take immense pride to be at the forefront during any national calamity to serve our nation. However, there is angst and profound resentment across the fraternity that some basic safety and security of the personnel are being ignored and compromised.
2. Certain banks have gone to the extent of directing: that in order to cater to the expected increase in the volume of transactions / urgent banking requirements on account of the Coronavirus Relief Measures of the government, all branches shall work on full strength effective 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and across the country till further instructions, thereby dispensing with the 'roster policy' / working on a skeletal strength / arrangements for rotation of staff members, 'working from home' etc. announced by them in their earlier circulars / communiqués. While some banks have exempted personnel from attending office who have the history of pre-existing critical diseases like cancer, heart ailments, respiratory issues, history of pneumonia and other fatal diseases, expectant mothers / ladies with new born babies, differently abled persons etc., others unfortunately are silent on this sensitive issue. Moreover, many officers who have

been residing at their place of posting as paying guest or availing hostel facilities, have been forced to vacate and are facing extreme hardship. This is despite the fact that as per information received from our Affiliates / State Units, there are at least three confirmed cases of contamination of the banking personnel across the country.

3. The working hours also have been revised by the SLBCs / banks to full time (10:00 AM to 5:00 PM), even though to get the service of operators for returning from workplace during the evening time are all the more difficult and bank employees are even not getting the basic amenities like food and drinking water.
4. Though it has been advised by certain banks that branches / Regions may collectively arrange pool vehicles / buses / vans / SUVs, etc. labelled with the "essential services" tag with some transport provider to arrange for bringing staff from particular destinations at the cost of the bank, in actuality such arrangements can hardly be organised in majority centres even in most of the metro cities.
5. Although it is advised to take all safeguards for COVID prevention like Social Distancing, enabling limited number of customers on the branch at a given point of time, maintaining adequate distance, staff wearing masks and gloves and frequent use of sanitisers, customers using protective gear etc., the ground reality is different.
  - a. Most of the branches are not having security guards, while possibilities of deployment of police / home guards / security personnel are remote because of the all pervading lockdown and lack of adequate personnel who are ready to take up such jobs.
  - b. Most of the branch premises are sized just fitting to the number of counters / staffs etc. and the prescribed distance of 1 to 1.5 metres between two counters is hardly maintained.
  - c. Supply of masks, sanitisers etc. is not adequate even in cities like Bangalore, Kolkata, Delhi etc., not to speak about the smaller centres and rural / semi-urban areas.
6. Certain banks have issued internal guidelines stating that officer / employee from the base branch should visit the BC points carrying 'adequate' cash with him / her on the precautionary measures at the BC points such as observance of social distancing measures, hygiene / sanitising aspects and for ensuring cash replenishment at all times. These guidelines are in contravention of many of the security norms laid down by RBI regarding carrying of cash etc.
7. Despite several communiqués addressed to the Hon'ble FM, hardly any compensation has been announced by the banks so as to enable the officers / employees to meet the additional expenses they are being forced to incur to meet exigencies. The demand for insurance coverage for bank employees to the extent of Rs.50 lakh per head (as have been announced in case of other essential service providers) has not been paid any heed so far.

The following issues have to be addressed in the right and honest perspective:

- ✓ Have the authorities made flawless arrangements for safety of all bank employees against the deadly COVID-19?
- ✓ Have they made satisfactory provisions for availability of all personal protective equipments (PPEs) for the bank employees and customers?
- ✓ Have the Banks in consultation with State Administration made contingency plans to ensure social distancing at every bank premises?
- ✓ Have the authorities made seamless arrangements for ensuring transportation for every employee during the lockdown?

On the other hand, the imminent sequel of the latest directives of Hon'ble FM will result in humongous workload on bank employees everywhere for reviving long inoperative Jan Dhan accounts, added responsibilities of managing the surging crowd in every bank branch, and on the top of all, high risk of exposing themselves, their families and all people with whom they would be interacting, to the dreadful virus, thereby defeating the very purpose of the national lockdown and imperative need for social distancing declared by none other than the Hon'ble PM.

It is strongly felt that the government / bank management has paid limited attention to the hygiene / safety of the bankmen and is in the process of exposing the entire banking fraternity and its stakeholders to avoidable risk even in the scenario of number of Coronavirus spread crossing 1,400 mark, increase in death tolls and the highest single-day increase of 227 cases as on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, when all other sections of the society are put under lockdown and advice of 'Stay at Home, Stay Safe' aphorism.

We are of the considered view that this irrational approach of a section of the authorities is a blatant deviation from 'Break the Chain' advocated by experts is not only inimical to the safety and security of the employees and officers of the banks but would also lead to multiplied chances of contamination to themselves and their family members as well as the public at large by way of community transmission causing serious irreparable repercussions to the society, at a time when the pandemic is poised to enter its third stage in our country.

We, therefore, express our strong resentment against these unreasonable and illogical decisions taken by a section of the authorities and urge upon you to redress the issues at the earliest, in the best interest of banking personnel as well as the Nation as a whole.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

**Sd/-**  
**(Soumya Datta)**  
**General Secretary**