

CIRCULAR NO. 88 /2021

DATE : 20.11.2021

TO,
ALL MEMBERS

IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE
OUR THOUGHTS AND CONCERNS

We reproduce hereunder the text of the **AISBOF Circular No. 88** dated 20.11.2021, the contents of which are self-explicit.

With warm greetings,

(Ajit Kumar Mishra)
GENERAL SECRETARY

OUR UNITY : ZINDABAD-ZINDABAD
S.B.I.O.A. : ZINDABAD-ZINDABAD

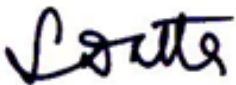
TEXT

IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE
OUR THOUGHTS AND CONCERNS

We have sent a communication to the Chairman, State Bank of India, on the captioned subject.

A copy is enclosed for information.

Yours comradely,



(Soumya Datta)
General Secretary

The Chairman
SBI, Corporate Centre, Madame Cama Road
Mumbai – 400 021.

Dear Sir,

IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE
OUR THOUGHTS AND CONCERNS

At the outset, we convey our heartiest festive greetings to you. It gives us immense pleasure and pride that our bank, being the premier financial institution of the country, has been able to register sterling performance in each quarter consecutively, posting highest-ever quarterly standalone net profit in the second quarter at ₹ 7,627 crore of this fiscal under your visionary and astute leadership. On behalf of the entire officers' fraternity, we would like to take this opportunity to place on record our sincere appreciation for your acknowledgement of the contribution of the workforce for the stellar performance. We also would like to convey our sincere gratitude for the avant-garde HR initiatives of the Bank during the challenging times for the safety and wellbeing of the employees which has been widely appreciated.

02. We recall your address to both the Federations on 31st July, 2021 sharing various concerns. We, on our part, have propagated the concerns, especially regarding customer service, across all forums throughout the country so that it percolates to the grass root level officers of the bank for taking our customer service to the next level.

03. Sir, you are well aware that the officers' fraternity have rendered their best service during the trying and testing times, braving adversities and risking their lives during the pandemic. Our officers have contributed relentlessly and stretched themselves beyond imaginable limits to ensure that the Bank grows in terms of business and achieves all the realizable targets even during the pandemic which have been aptly reflected in the balance sheet of FY'21 and also in results of Q-1 & Q-2 of FY'22.

04. Sir, in our journey towards excellence and to be the 'first choice' bank to every Indian, we deem it necessary to share few sensitive issues and grievances of our officers which have emerged during our interactions at various forums. We reckon it to be most pertinent to draw your kind attention to these issues and request your personal intervention for an early resolution to these issues in the interest of our esteemed organisation and our fraternity.

a) Misbehaviour of controllers: While we are emphasizing on improvement in the area of customer service, we are disdainful of our internal customers. As **Douglas Conant** said it rightfully, *"To win in the marketplace, you must first win in the workplace."* Work-life balance is seriously impeded as officers are being forced to work 10-12 hours a day and, on top of that, are being summoned on Sundays/ Holidays rampantly disrupting their family life, personal commitment and exigencies. Humiliation of the officers in presence of peers and subordinates at various meetings in open forums are widely experienced. P-Review meetings are being continued till late night even after 11:00 P.M. where the Branch Managers, including lady officers, are compelled to attend from different branches of the region after completion of day's work. It becomes a nightmare, particularly for the lady officers, to return home at around midnight. Avoidable, unsustainable workload and mental pressure are put on the frontline officers by some controllers. We have reports of webinars being conducted on Sundays/ Holidays and even during festivals, which infringes the fundamental personal liberty of not only the officers but also of their families. Handing out threats, use of abusive, derogatory and un-parliamentary language, humiliating officers in front of staff and public, undue transfers before completion of tenure, non-sanction/refusal of leaves of all types with no merit for the ground/reason on which leave is applied, avoidable suspensions etc. have almost become the order of the day. This decadent work culture is fast spreading its tentacles across the country.

b) Poor connectivity at different branches: While other banks, especially our competitors from the private sector, are rendering customer service seamlessly, our branches are unable to render their services timely and effectively due to poor connectivity. Branches, especially at remote areas are facing tremendous connectivity problem while retrieving customers' signatures on the screen and other CBS related works which is a serious hindrance to improving customer service as a consequence avoidable stress is caused to the frontline staff besides causing a dent to the goodwill and the reputation of the bank.

c) Abnormal pressure on compliance: We acknowledge the importance and necessity of compliance in our day-to-day work, but would also emphasise that abnormal pressure, irrational timeline and insistence from controllers lead to false compliances and ultimately branches are downgraded in RFIA followed by initiation of disciplinary proceedings against the erring officials as well as reduction in CDS score.

d) Unhealthy strategy being adopted by the controllers to achieve target: It has been observed that many of the controllers have strategized to achieve numbers by any means. In their zeal to grab promotion at the first available opportunity, banking ethics, guidelines, instructions are brushed aside consciously. We are aware that many Branch Managers have been charge sheeted because of succumbing to the pressure of the Controllers to do certain transactions in violation to bank's guidelines. The pressure to sell third party products is leading to rampant mis-selling and duping of gullible customers. SBI Life products are being sold as bank's fixed deposit to Senior Citizens who visit the branches with intent to invest their superannuation benefits in fixed deposits. We have come across several complaints resulting there from which also get wide circulation in the social media thereby causing avoidable reputational loss of our esteemed institution. SBI Cards personnel are targeting gullible customers at branches and deceiving them to apply for SBI Credit Cards to achieve targets leading to a number of online frauds. Further, pressure to achieve loan targets in retail is leading to sanction of dubious proposals which lead to quick mortality. This unholy rat race for being number one in MD matrix in all parameters is damaging the basic tenets of our esteemed institution. The ethos, principles and values are being compromised. We believe fervently that these contagious unethical practices must be stopped forthwith otherwise the Bank will have to pay a heavy price in the long run.

e) Acute Staff Shortage vis-à-vis Man Power Planning: Human resources is the core strength of any service industry and quality of service is directly associated with the employee who is interacting with the customer. As per reports from the circles, there is acute shortage of staff of all categories and a significant percentage of branches in each Circle are run by single officers who are being constantly subjected to intense work-pressure seriously affecting their work life balance. Even branches with scale 3 and 4 incumbencies are run with skeleton staff. Further, the change in the nature of job, working environment and organisational behaviour has transformed the prevailing environment, climate and culture as rigid, unhelpful and hostile. Tremendous work pressure coupled with lack of adequate rest has a direct bearing on the health of the bank officers in addition to toll on the degree of their efficiency.

05. Apart from the above-mentioned financial issues, we would like to draw your attention to certain sensitive issues which need to be addressed urgently:

- (i) Revision of rental ceiling for leased accommodation/ Car parking & maintenance Charges:** The existing ceiling of rental for leased accommodation was last revised with effect from 01.07.2012 i.e. nine (9) years back. As per present market condition, suitable leased accommodation is hardly available within the existing ceiling of rent provided by bank to the officers. Many officers are paying additional amounts from their own pocket for a reasonable/decent accommodation at most centres.
- (ii) Revision of monetary ceiling for purchase of residential furniture & fixtures by officers:** The existing monetary ceiling for purchase of residential furniture & fixtures was last revised with

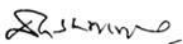
effect from 01.09.2013 i.e. eight (8) years back. During this span of eight (8) years, market price of furniture & fixtures has increased multiple times but in spite of our repeated persuasion, the monetary ceiling for purchase of residential furniture & fixtures has not been revised by our bank while market inflation has driven prices vertically upwards. Many PSU banks have already revised the ceiling during the current fiscal making their scheme not only superior to our existing entitlements but also realistically relevant to the market prices.


- (iii) **Revision of Quantum of Housing Loan, Car loan and Personal to staff:** You are aware that the loan limits in respect of Individual Housing Loan to staff was last revised vide Circular no CDO/P&HRD-IR/93/2020-21 dated 17.03.2021 **sans any improvement of loan limits to officers' upto scale III.** Since housing loan is a very lucrative business and staff housing loan being a hundred percent secured asset, we deem that the existing loan limit may be enhanced for our employees and staff, factoring in the enhanced repayment capacity as a consequence of the recent wage revision. During this festive season, our bank has offered some concession in rate of interest for housing loan to public. We propose to provide same relaxation to our employees and officers. The rationale of linking the rate of interest on staff loans to the cost of funds needs to be revisited in view of a significant lowering of the cost of funds as a result of considerable decrease in deposit rates. Similarly, limits of Car Loan and Personal Loan were also last revised on 23.10.2020 and 13.11.2020 respectively which were also prior to salary revision. Bank may, therefore, consider enhancing the loan limits further in these segments keeping in pace with high market inflation.
- (iv) **Provision for insurance coverage on Personal loan and Car loan provided to employees and officers on death in harness:** Unfortunately, many of our employees and officers succumbed to the deadly virus of COVID-19. The pandemic is still prevailing and it is unpredictable how many lives will be lost further due to this unprecedented catastrophe. The untimely and tragic demise of our employees and officers have made the bereaved families to fall in acute distress and financial crunch, especially by being called upon to liquidate the outstanding loans. In this backdrop, we request your good office to consider providing insurance cover for the outstanding amount of Car and Personal loans on the lines as has been extended for individual housing loan to employees/ retired employees so as to provide some relief to the family members from the onus of repaying bank dues.
- (v) **Removal of gross disparity in pay between officers and workmen:** This is a major area of dissatisfaction amongst the officers. You are well aware that salary of category of workmen has been hiked significantly after enhancement of special pay which created a gross disparity of salary as well as superannuation benefits between officers and workmen. Considering the elevated levels of risk, responsibilities and work load, the officers' community deserves a respectable improvement in gross salary and pay protection to maintain a justified enhancement from that of the workmen. To address this disparity, we have already proposed to introduce a grade pay, ranking for all benefits, for officers across all grades.

06. Sir, as major stake holders, we feel that it is our bounden duty to bring to the fore all the pain points and emerging challenges, which have to be addressed in right earnest for the betterment of our bank. We reaffirm our wholehearted support for the sustainable growth of the bank and also in retaining its premier position in the years to come.

'Stay Safe, Stay Healthy'

With best regards,
Yours sincerely,


(Deepak K Sharma)
President


Soumya Datta
General Secretary