



UNITED BANK OF INDIA EMPLOYEES' UNION

REGD. NO.14874

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To All Members

Sub: Absence during Lockdown Period

Consequent upon Nationwide Lockdown announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, public transport including bus; suburban train; metro rail; ferry; app cab etc was suspended from 25th March 2020. In some places Lockdown started from 23rd March 2020. As a result of this, the employees who used to attend their places of posting availing public transport found it difficult/impossible to commute to the branches/offices. Quite a good number of employees, posted far away from their residence but could not come back even after exercising option, had been usually visiting their family members during weekends. With sudden declaration of Lockdown, giving only four hours' time, such employees were stranded at their homes.

We realized that it was not possible for the employees to arrange vehicle on their own for various purposes. Moreover, the owners mostly were reluctant to provide cars to individual employees during Lockdown. Though, initially the Lockdown was announced for 21 days but, so far, it has remained in force for 54 days till 17th May 2020 next. Hence, since 26th March 2020, very next day of Lockdown started, we demanded of the bank for arrangement of vehicle for the employees to commute to the branches and going back. We also felt that many employees are residing far away from their branches and it may not be possible to commute by hired vehicle every day. Alternatively, we suggested for temporary attachment in branches nearer to their residence.

The HRMD Department of Punjab National Bank issued a communication on 15th April 2020 on temporary attachment. The facility was extended only to those employees who **left their duty station on sanctioned leave or left the duty station with prior permission**. A similar communication was issued from United Tower, Kolkata by the General Manager of erstwhile United Bank of India; sent by e-mail to the Region authorities, subsequently to the branches. Both the communiqué remained silent on those employees who are commuting every day from their residence which do not come within their duty station; such employees are not required to obtain prior approval on daily basis. There was no mention of those who were stuck to their homes coming for weekend but could not return due to sudden suspension of public transport. The communiqué further declared that **the employees who will neither attend office nor work from home will be**

marked on leave. It would not be out of context to mention that no workman employee has been working from home. Moreover, the communication did not exempt the physically disabled persons; pregnant employees; employees with high risk from attending office as has been done in some other banks in line with advisories issued by Departments of Govt. of India.

There followed complete anarchy in regard to temporary attachment. Different Region Offices acted differently, so to speak whimsically. Most of the employees of different branches coming daily to the branches from residence availing public transport were not given temporary attachment on the plea of non availability of prior approval. Some Region Offices expressed as condition of attachment that the employees should visit Region Office. Other than a few temporary attachment the respective Branch and Regional authorities did not inform the applicants about fate of their requests. Despite our request, the competent authority remained indifferent to such attitude of the respective managements.

In the mean time, the branch managements, in some cases dictated by the Regional management, started to put pressure on the employees to come to the branches **by any means**. Mails were sent to some employees terming such absence as '**unauthorised**'. In many branches the employees were compelled to enter leave into SAP HRMS due to intimidation of branch management. We are not ruling out instances that leave of some employees in Subordinate cadre may be entered forcefully or without their knowledge/consent. We came across information that wages have been deducted for absence during this period quite arbitrarily.

Since 26th March till 2nd May 2020, we sent as many as six letters addressed to the General Manager (HR) at United Tower on matters related to Lockdown including attendance. In the last letter we expressed our strong reservation on apparent reluctance of the management even to reply which was impairing the industrial relation. On 2nd May 2020, the DIR Department replied to our letter upholding the PNB HRMD communication issued on 15th April 2020 which means that whosoever not attending the office will be marked on leave. **In the prevailing situation, we have approached the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central), New Delhi seeking his intervention in the matter.**

With warm greetings,

Yours comradely,



(Debasish Basu Chaudhury)
General Secretary