



STATE BANK OF PAKISTAN
I.I CHUNDRIGAR ROAD
KARACHI

FD Circular No.01 of 2020

March 23, 2020

The Presidents/ Chief Executives
All Banks/ Microfinance Banks.

Dear Sir / Madam,

COVID-19 – Uninterrupted Supply of Disinfected Cash at Banks and ATMs

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a pandemic in view of its rapid spread across many regions and countries. Pakistan is also one of the affected countries in which confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been detected. The administrative machinery both at the Federal and the Provincial level is taking necessary steps to contain the spread of the virus and to protect the citizens from its adverse health effects.

Banks being part of the service industry have to entertain customers from different strata of population across their branch network. Moreover, the bank-staff frequently deals in transactions involving banknotes, coins and negotiable instruments, including cheques, pay orders, banker's cheques and similar other instruments. All the instruments which serve as medium of exchange change hands frequently amongst the members of general populace. Subject to atmospheric pressure and humidity, the surfaces of banknotes, cheques, and coins, like many materials, could serve as a habitat for the virus, as apprehended by some agencies and researchers. Notwithstanding the absence of conclusive evidence so far as to enhanced risk from the use of banking instruments, as well as differing opinions thereon, the SBP feels that some prudent measures must be taken by the banking industry in order to ensure safe, secure and socially responsible banking practices. The banks shall therefore, take following measures to ensure safe and secure processing of paper based instruments and issuance of fit, clean and disinfected banknotes to their clients:

- a) All banks should encourage their customers to use digital means for payment and settlement of their transactions; for the purpose the banks must engage their clients through SMS updates, bank's websites and advertisements in traditional as well as social media.
- b) The banks may inform their customers, preferably through digital means, that the basic hygiene practices like washing of hands, and using of hand sanitizers/ disinfectants, should be adopted soon after touching banknotes, coins and other paper based instruments.
- c) The environment of every bank's branch should present the image of a socially responsible banking service. Specifically, the staff engaged in processing banknotes, coins and other banking instruments must be provided with necessary protective gears and provisions such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizers/ disinfectants.
- d) The banks maintaining the accounts of hospitals and clinics shall make necessary arrangement with them whereby cash collected from such clients shall be disinfected, sealed and secured separately and shall be quarantined until further order. The amount of quarantined cash shall be reported by the banks on consolidated basis electronically at quarantine.cash@sbp.org.pk through their head offices to the Chief Manager, SBP-Banking Services Corporation, Karachi on the format given as

Annexure-A hereto. The SBP shall, on receipt of the statement give credit to banks on the same day and in-lieu thereof; the quarantined cash shall thus be kept by banks with them on behalf of SBP till further orders. The consolidated amount of the credit so received must be reconcilable and verifiable by entries in the accounts of the individual hospitals and clinics.

- e) The cash collections from all other sources should also be handled with due-care and should preferably be disinfected in addition to authenticating, sorting, and packing as required under the Currency Management Strategy (CMS).
- f) Cash in-transit (CIT) companies provide cash transportation services to the banks and therefore, in order to keep the cash supply chain operational, the banks shall require all their cash service providers, including CIT companies, to ensure availability of their services during this critical period. Banks shall also require their cash service providers to follow good hygiene and safety practices while transporting and handling the cash. The guards of CIT companies must be using gloves and masks during the course of their duties, besides encouraging such companies to make available to their security staff provisions like hand sanitizers/ disinfectants so that safe and secured transportation of cash may be ensured.
- g) The banks shall take reasonable steps to ensure that cash being issued from the banking ecosystem is fit for use by the general public. Accordingly, from 6th April 2020 till further orders they shall issue either fresh cash or the re-issuable cash quarantined for fourteen (14) days or more. The SBP BSC offices have sufficient stock of such cash; if needed the banks can obtain the same from SBP BSC well before the 6th April 2020. They can also use the fresh banknotes already issued to them under Eid quota. The banks may surrender their surplus re-issuable balances to the nearest SBP Banking Services Corporation field office/ National Bank of Pakistan Chest provided it is authenticated, sorted and packed as per SBP instructions.
- h) The ATMs shall also be replenished with fresh banknotes or with the ATM-fit re-issuable notes taken from SBP Banking Services Corporation from 6th April 2020.
- i) While the SBP shall continue to supply Authorized Dealers (ADs) with foreign currency notes against credit in the SBP nostro accounts under Para 11, Chapter 11 of the Foreign Exchange (F.E) Manual, the SBP counter services to accept foreign currency notes from the ADs, under Para 10 of the above-referred Chapter of the F.E Manual, shall remain suspended. However, the ADs shall continue to facilitate their customers/ account holders with respect to foreign currency services as usual.

Please acknowledge receipt.

Yours faithfully,
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Qader Bakhsh
Director