



ALL INDIA BANK EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

Central Office: "PRABHAT NIVAS" Regn. No.2037
Singapore Plaza, 164, Linghi Chetty Street, Chennai-600001
Phone: 2535 1522 Fax: 2535 8853 Web: www.aibea.in
e mail ~ chv.aibea@gmail.com & aibeahq@gmail.com

Are Banks becoming heartless and brainless ?

Undue harassment for small loan defaulters and velvet treatment for corporate defaulters?

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BIHAR -

**No Earning Post-Lockdown,
Teacher Ends Life Allegedly Due to Bank Pressure**

The chemistry teacher in Bhagalpur was depressed after being publicly humiliated for not repaying a loan, alleged his relatives.

Mohd. Imran Khan, 9 Jan 2021 Patna: Newsclick

Unable to face tremendous pressure to repay a loan to a private bank due to the over nine-month-long closure of his coaching institute during the pandemic-induced lockdown Chandra Bhushan Singh, a popular chemistry teacher, allegedly died by suicide in Bhagalpur district on Friday.

As per reports, the private sector bank officials were allegedly harassing Singh and had served him notice to repay the loan without any delay.

Singh, popularly known as "C B Sir" among his colleagues and students in the silk city of Bhagalpur, was facing a financial crunch as the coaching centre where he taught had been closed since last March till January 3. In Bihar, coaching centres and schools were allowed to reopen on January 4, with proper guidelines.

Singh, in his mid-40s, was a resident of Vivekanand Colony near Sarai Road. He had constructed the house after taking a loan from **HDFC bank** ahead of the sudden countrywide lockdown imposed on March 25, which brought his teaching profession at a coaching institute to a standstill. Like hundreds of private coaching teachers, he was left with no source of income and had to manage his family with help from some close relatives.

“He failed to earn anything for several months and thus could not repay the equated monthly instalments (EMIs) to the bank during the period. The bank first put pressure on him last year, followed by a threat to humiliate him. All this had depressed him and he was restless and worried about how to get rid of the bank’s repeated pressure to repay loan. There is no doubt that he was forced to end life due to the private bank’s pressure to repay the loan”, Shashi Bhushan Singh, the deceased’s elder brother, alleged.

He said his younger brother was happy ahead of the lockdown as his teaching career was doing well and he had constructed house and shifted there. But things turned ugly with lockdown that badly affected him. His coaching was closed and there was no source of income. Yet the bank put pressure and harassed him, his brother added.

According to another close family member, Singh had taken a loan of Rs 4 lakh from HDFC bank and had already paid Rs 2.30 lakh till the lockdown was imposed.

“He was upset after bank officials harassed him in public for his failure to repay loan” he alleged, adding that “what hurt Singh badly last month was when some bank officials visited his house and humiliated him in the presence of his students”.

After that, a group of teachers from different coaching institutes, along with Singh, visited the bank and protested, following which a compromise formula was finalised that he would start repaying the loan from March 2021. Unfortunately, after coaching reopened in first week of January, the bank issued a notice to him, asking him to repay loan immediately, a relative said.

Job and income losses during the lockdown continue to take a toll on ordinary lives.

Dr Sambey, a Bhagalpur-based writer, said he was pained to know that a coaching teacher was forced to end his life due to repeated bank pressure to repay a loan. “In the past six months many people have committed suicide in view of loss of job, no livelihood, debt and financial crunch”, he said.

This is not an isolated case. Similar cases have been reported across Bihar in the past six month, and over a dozen people facing financial crunch due to lockdown have died by suicide after being allegedly harassed by private finance companies, moneylenders and banks to repay loans or credit.

After the sudden lockdown, millions of skilled and unskilled workers, drivers, vendors were rendered jobless or without any work, as per official figures.

In Bihar, joblessness after the lockdown has created a big challenge, with more than 21 lakh migrant workers returning to the state, as per official data.

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy’s estimates, for the past 20 months – since February 2019 – the unemployment rate in Bihar has been more than 10%. It is one of the longest cycles of unemployment that the state has ever seen.
