

## **Issue only Rupay cards, seed all accounts with Aadhaar by Dec: FM to banks**

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Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told bankers on Tuesday to only issue Rupay cards as the first option to customers, and also to seed all bank accounts with Aadhaar number and, wherever necessary, with the pan card by December this year.

“Rupay should be the only card that you must promote,” Sitharaman said in her address as the chief guest at the 73rd Annual General Meeting of the Indian Banks’ Association (IBA).

“Make sure the NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India) can become a ‘brand India’ product. Whenever issuing a card, you must first issue a Rupay (floated by NPCI) card,” the finance minister said in her address.

“Indian banks have done a tremendous job, but the financial inclusion drive is not over. I will not be patient to hear that there still exist accounts not Aadhaar seeded, and linked with Pan cards wherever needed beyond December 31st. There should not be any unverified account in the system,” the finance minister said, while clarifying a few moments later that the deadline could be extended till March next year at the maximum.

Technology should be adopted widely to ensure there is no duplication in booking benefits for the customers, or double encashment of a security. “It should be a fool proof arrangement so that you become a better managed bank,” Sitharaman said.

At the same time, the finance minister told bankers that they must “discourage non-digital payments,” and “UPI (unified payments interface) should be a common parlance word in banks.”

Every customer, from every walk of life and economic background, should be able to access every services of banks digitally, and there should be tailor made services made for customers from every background, the finance minister instructed top bankers.

In what may turn out to be a major development for retired bank employees, the finance minister said Indian banks must treat their retired employees the same way as those in defence.

“Being the former Defence Minister, I can advise Indian banks that they must treat their employees the same way defence does. There everyone is treated as one family, be it the servicemen or retired. I want to have the same culture in the Indian banking system and want them to take care of their retired employees in a better way,” the finance minister said, while not giving much details on what could be in the offing the coming days.

“Each and every staff, from top down to the bottom should be made to feel that they are part of your family and that post retirement they should not be forgotten,” the finance minister said.

The finance minister earnestly thanked the bank employees, from the top executive to the business correspondent level, for serving the nation tirelessly during the pandemic and attributed the fast recovery in the economy, and success of various welfare schemes launched by the government, to the hard work of Indian bankers who steadfastly continued with their service and credit delivery wherever needed.

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## **Making Corporate India Comply**

“I want to convey Government of India’s appreciation, on record, to each one of you – from the top executive to branch level employees and the business correspondents – all of you who risked their lives every day to provide service to your customers and the nation -- your contribution will be remembered for the next 100 years,” Sitharaman said.

However, Indian bankers must also improve their professionalism and the amalgamation of banks should be taken as an organic way to create large banks in the country to serve aspiring India. “I want eight State Bank of India in the country. Every bank should be professional and in the post corona world, as the world changes, you should also not remain the same, especially after the amalgamations,” the finance minister said.

The post pandemic world won’t remain the same and the corporations are undergoing a reset, and so should all banks. “There won’t be the same old normal. The new normal will be very dynamic in a new economy,” she addressed bankers in her virtual speech.

The Indian banks are also undergoing training under the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) so that they get over their fear of the three ‘C’s -- CVC, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). This will enable them to take prudent risks and lend without fear instead of not taking credit decisions for fear of getting hauled up later if business decisions go wrong.

The finance minister also stressed upon attending to all customer grievances and told banks to improve their complaint resolution mechanisms.