

BACKPAGEREAD

Co-op bank charges tobacco chewers more in Gujarat

Ahmedabad: Spearheading a 'no tobacco' campaign from the banking sector, Rajkot People's Co-operative Bank is the sole bank from Gujarat to have enforced a policy that discourages tobacco usage at all levels of operations.

"As a policy, we charge one per cent higher interest from loan-seekers who are tobacco chewers," bank founder chairman Shamji Khut said on Sunday.

"The bank's board had passed a resolution around two and a half years ago, and since then it is in force," he said.

"Only one customer has refused to take a loan from us, stating that he cannot quit tobacco chewing even if we charged him two per cent higher interest," Khut said.

Over a decade old, the bank since its inception has a clause that empowers the management to terminate the services of employees who consume tobacco.

"The bank does not recruit persons who have any tobacco addiction. We have 74 employees," Khut said.

"As a rule, we can terminate the service of an employee if he is found consuming tobacco in any

THE RAJKOT PEOPLE'S COOPERATIVE BANK HAS A POLICY NOT TO RECRUIT PERSONS WHO HAVE ANY FORM OF TOBACCO ADDICTION

form. Even a board of director has to submit his resignation if found consuming tobacco," Khut said.

The bank, with five branches in Rajkot district, has 30,000 customers and deposits of over Rs96 crore. It has sought the Reserve Bank of India's nod to open branches in Jamnagar, Junagadh, Gondal, Morbi and Jasdand.

"During staff recruitment, we will give preference to candidates who shun tobacco," Khut said, adding that nearly 30 persons will be recruited for the proposed branches.

Our 11 board directors are also very much supportive of this anti-tobacco campaign, he added.

"I was inspired by my school teacher Jayant Acharya, who was a firm believer that people without addiction are better performers than those with the addiction," Khut said, -PTI