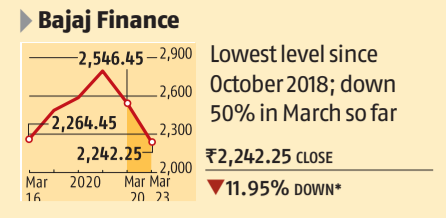
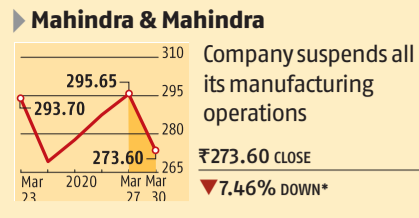
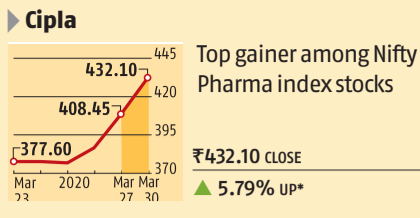
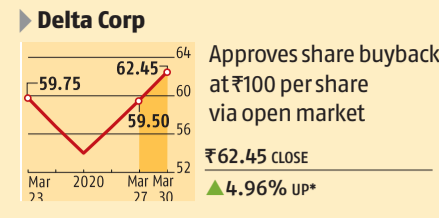
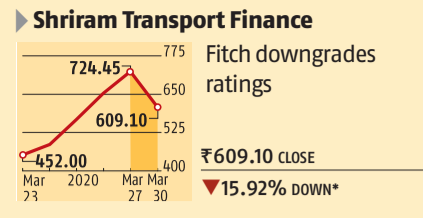


STOCKS IN THE NEWS



IN BRIEF
Govt comes out with schemes for 'fresh start' for firms, LLPs

Seeking to provide a "fresh start" for companies and Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs), the government on Monday extended the deadline for submitting filings without late fee till September 30. Besides, the entities would get immunity from penal proceedings with respect to delay in submission of requisite filings. The introduction of fresh start scheme for companies and revision in settlement scheme for LLPs come against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic that has also resulted in disruption of business activities. In a release, the corporate affairs ministry said the schemes are part of efforts to provide relief to law-abiding companies and LLPs in the wake of Covid-19.



Extend prepaid validity for steady services: Trai

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) asked telecom operators to extend the validity period of prepaid users to ensure that subscribers get uninterrupted services during the 21-day nationwide lockdown.

IAG sells 26% stake in SBI General for \$310 million

Insurance Australia Group (IAG), the JV partner in SBI General Insurance, has completed the sale of its stake in State Bank of India-promoted general insurance firm to Premji Invest and Warburg Pincus group for \$310 million. SBI said, "IAG has completed its sale of 26 per cent interest in SBI General in India."

Crew being given standard gear: AI pilots' union to Puri

Air India crew members are being provided with standard, ill-fitting and flimsy personal protective equipment (PPE) on special flights being operated during the lockdown, a union of the airline's pilots complained to Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

Lockdown period to be excluded from IBC timeline: NCLAT

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal on Monday directed that the lockdown period, as announced by the government, would be excluded for the purpose of counting of days for all ongoing insolvency matters, which are time bound.

HDFC MF raises stake in SpiceJet to over 5%

HDFC MF has picked up 0.42 per cent stake in SpiceJet, taking its stake to 5.05 per cent. According to exchange disclosure, the transaction was concluded on March 19. Both HDFC Balanced Advantage Fund and HDFC Capital Builder Fund bought the shares of the airlines.

Suzlon Energy's lenders approve debt resolution plan

Suzlon Energy has said all its lenders have agreed to its debt resolution plan. "State Bank of India has conveyed that the resolution plan of the company and its certain identified subsidiaries was approved by it," Suzlon said.

Corporates join hands in fight against Covid

Led by Apollo Hospitals, firms to set up isolation rooms

VIVEAT SUSAN PINTO & GIRESH BABU
Mumbai/Chennai, 30 March

Quarantine facilities are rapidly becoming important as Covid-19 cases steadily mount in India. The issue acquires significance given the acute shortage of beds and rooms to handle confirmed and suspect Covid-19 patients.

Integrated health care major Apollo Hospitals on Monday said it was launching an initiative called 'Project Stay I' to create quarantine and isolation facilities for coronavirus patients.

Part of its 'Project Kavach' programme launched on Thursday, the initiative has been supported by a number of corporate, financial and hospitality majors, making it the first of its kind in the country.

Under the initiative, Oyo, Lemon Tree, and Ginger Hotels will provide 500 rooms in the first phase of the programme involving five cities for patients to stay in isolation.

Hindustan Unilever (HUL), Deutsche Bank and State Bank of India will take care of the cost of isolation, including cost of lodging, medical care and Wifi, while Zomato will provide food at these isolation rooms. Cities include Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai, with Kolkata to be added next week. Apollo Hospitals and Biocon will provide medical and testing facilities at these rooms, with patients charged only for medicines they take during their stay.

"Project Stay I is an innovative and scalable programme that uses existing infrastructure to contain the spread of the virus. We have committed to adding up to 5,000 rooms across the country and will do so by adding 50-100 rooms every week depending on the demand in each city," said Sangita Reddy, joint managing director, Apollo Hospitals Group.

Those suspected of having Covid-19 symptoms can check into these hotels, book their stays, share their medical details and escalate quickly in case they need further attention, Reddy said. Their vital health parameters will be monitored with the help of telemedicine and tech-based solutions that will feed the data into a



CORPORATE COMMITMENTS

	(₹ cr)
Tata Group	1,500
Paytm	500
ITC	150
Bajaj/Vedanta/HUL/JSW/Adani/Torrent/PhonePe	100

L&T, RIL, TVS Motor pitch in with funds

The PM-CARES Fund, set up for Covid-19 relief efforts, saw more funds pouring in on Monday with conglomerates like Reliance Industries (RIL) and Larsen & Toubro (L&T) making fresh announcements. RIL will donate ₹500 crore, while L&T has committed ₹150 crore to the fund. In addition, L&T will set aside a monthly outlay of ₹500 crore for their contract labour. RIL's commitment is exclusive of another ₹5 crore to state funds in Gujarat and Maharashtra. TVS Motor and its arms, also committed ₹25 crore to the fund.

Others, including Reliance Foundation, Mahindra Group, Bajaj Group, ITC and HUL, are also lending support in the battle against the pandemic, committing money, stepping up public awareness programmes and chipping in with subsidised hygiene and healthcare products.

On Monday, Sanjiv Mehta, chairman and MD, HUL, said, "Isolation facilities are extremely important to curb the spread of the virus. We are delighted to collaborate with organisations like Apollo Hospitals to help create isolation facilities. We believe this will help in augmenting the quarantine system already put in place by the government."

Capacity utilisation across FMCG units expected to go up

AVISHEK RAKSHIT
Kolkata, 30 March

The truncated capacity utilisation across FMCG companies is likely to ease in the coming week as more trucks are set to be available. This comes after the Centre paved the way for transportation of both essential as well as non-essential items.

Earlier, there was no restriction on movement of essential items but companies faced major challenges of procuring raw materials as well as packaging them. Moreover, truck scarcity added to their woes. According to the Federation of West Bengal Truck Operators Association (FWBTOA), of a total of 9 million trucks in India, only 4-5 per cent are currently operational.

Industry executives feel the new move from the Centre will help address both procurement as well as supply issues of finished products to a certain extent.

"I think things on the logistics front will improve in the next week, which, in turn, will help boost operational efficiency in the plants. Although production cannot be at the normal level, I anticipate capacity utilisation to improve from the current level of 10-15 per cent to 30-35 per cent," Mayank Shah, senior category head at Parle Products, told *Business Standard*.

Industry officials noted that owing to ambiguities around defining essential items, issues on inter-state and intra-state movement of trucks, raw material procurement and availability of workers, companies faced both production and supply issues.

"While earlier the Centre and states allowed movement of essential items, there are several non-essentials which go into making an essential item. Previously, trucks were reluctant to move these raw materials as there was

no clarity if they will be allowed. However, now I think it will be easier to procure raw materials and improve operational efficiency at the plants," said an industry executive. According to an ITC spokesperson, a "few more days" will be needed for the entire ecosystem and processes to be streamlined for movement of essential goods.

Firms like Enami Agrotech, which had closed plants owing to scarcity of workers and transport, is also reopening them as it feels logistical challenges can now be addressed to a certain extent. "We are reopening our plants in a phased manner. First, we will start with despatches, and based on how things improve, we will take a call on improving production," said Aditya V Agarwal, director at the Enami Group.

Enami Agrotech has reopened its plants in Jaipur, Haldia and Krishnapatnam. It is expected to commence operations soon. Over the past few weeks, all FMCG firms had reduced production drastically owing to lower availability of workers and transport. Some had opted for temporary shutdowns. However, even though transportation of non-essential goods was allowed, firms are keen to make essential items like packaged food, hygiene products and daily essentials.

Industry executives feel there is a huge backlog in the market which needs to be addressed first. "Our effort is to ensure that consumers, during these trying times, are not inconvenienced on account of shortage and unavailability of essential products. We have redoubled our efforts to ensure a heightened level of precaution. We have implemented strict protocols for safety, personal hygiene and sanitation in these select factories and for our salesmen and value-chain partners," said an ITC spokesperson.

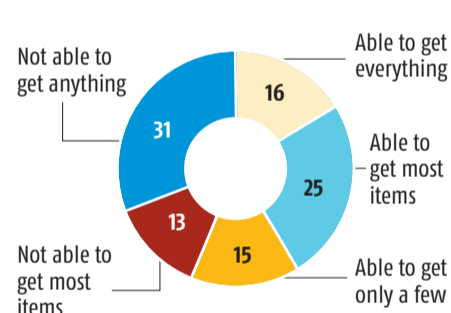


KIRANAS BEAT E-COM GIANTS DURING COVID CRISIS: STUDY

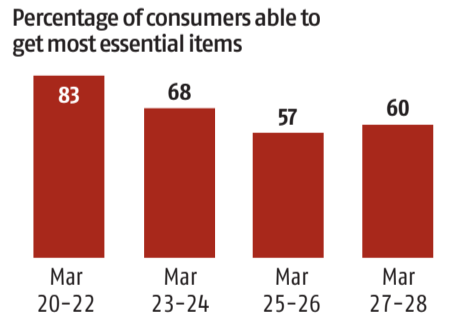
Despite a significant growth in e-commerce's reach and sales during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the local kirana stores have emerged winners. The traditional trade channel that serves over 1.3 billion people, compared to some 120 million by e-commerce, has fared significantly better when it comes to the availability of essential goods like rice, wheat, pulses, milk, sugar and salt. Obstacles faced by delivery personnel during the initial days of the lockdown might have played a key role in its poor service and a sudden dip in availability of essential items on online channels also impacted many. The situation, however, is improving fast, with over 40 per cent of consumers now able to purchase essential items online, compared to only 21 per cent a week ago.

COMPILED BY ARNAB DUTTA

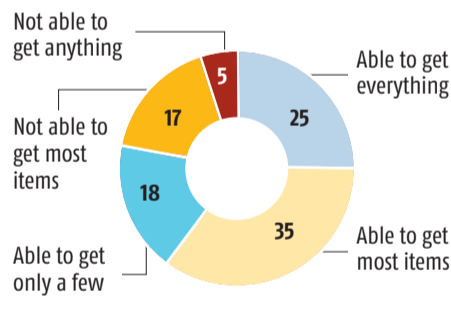
Only 41% got essential goods on e-commerce (%)



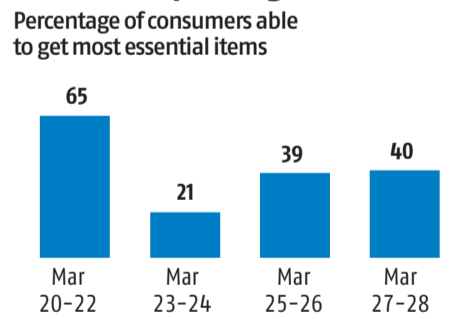
Availability at offline stores stabilising



Nearly 60% got essential items at local stores (%)



Availability on e-commerce channel improving



Source: LocalCircles

E-com firms short on delivery executives

PEERZADA ABRAR & SAMREEN AHMAD
Bengaluru, 30 March

Despite e-commerce companies saying they're resuming their services, many of them still face challenges in delivering even essential products to consumers. Several e-commerce companies are struggling to get enough of curfew passes, besides being short on delivery personnel.

"Given the strong and unconditional enforcement of lockdown rules by most local authorities, the delivery personnel were fearful for their security and didn't turn up for work. Many of these personnel are migrants and many have gone back to their hometowns — it will be a challenge to bring them back," said Sachin Tappar, founder and chairman of LocalCircles, a leading community and consumer platform which works with various ministries.

In districts across the country, he says, many delivery people still need to get curfew passes. This can take days, due to the manual processes of granting these. Instead, he suggests, a valid ID card and letter from the e-commerce company concerned should be accepted by local authorities.

"Also, in different villages where major warehouses of e-commerce firms are located, the local sarpanchs are not letting e-commerce delivery people either enter or go out. So, less than half of all e-commerce orders have been delivered in the country; the majority of orders are still pending due to non-availability of the resources and workers to deliver these," said Tappar.

Some of these e-commerce companies actually have all the government approvals needed to deliver but are still stuck. "The situation in e-commerce has nothing to do with the employers now. Because of the announcement of the lockdown, a lot of staff which was coming from other cities and



towns have just packed their bags and decided to leave," says Rituparna Chakraborty, president, Indian Staffing Federation, apex body of organised staffing companies and representing a little over a million contract workers employed across 100 staffing company members annually.

They work with some of the biggest e-commerce firms. "The Amazons of the world and all these e-commerce entities could have operated by providing essential services, but they don't have enough hands to successfully deliver, (though) the demand has increased exponentially," said Chakraborty.

While the central government has asked that certain procedures e followed uniformly for e-commerce services, local authorities are following different rules at state, city and district levels, observes Ankur Pahwa, partner for e-commerce and consumer internet at consultancy EY India. "Also, the staff shortage at warehouses is making the process of packing and delivering of products a problem. And, a lot of delivery people have concerns about their security and have gone back to their home towns. A lot of people are falling out of the employment-serving curve." Adding: "Though e-commerce companies are getting a huge amount of orders and there is a greater amount of adoption of people using digital platforms to buy and consume, there is not enough infrastructure to deliver."

'We need to recalibrate this unnecessary lockdown'

Bajaj Auto has, like most others in the auto industry, closed its production operations. But Managing Director RAJIV BAJAJ, in an email interview to Surajeet Das Gupta, gives his contrarian views on the complete lockdown the government has imposed. Edited excerpts:

What do you think are the best and the worst-case scenarios for two-wheelers? What is your view on the lockdown?

The best-case scenario is eight weeks of disruption. Nobody knows what the worst is. When 99.9 per cent of the most vulnerable are above 65, I see no logic in this sweeping lockdown in a country in which 94 per cent are below 65. We should have kept the seniors home, closed public spaces, and allowed the rest of us to keep life moving forward.



Do you see demand returning after the lockdown is lifted? How do you see growth for this year, and how much will it be affected?
It is bound to be a slow and strained recovery.

Does the industry have to reduce its workforce? What are the other ways of trimming its sails?
The smaller ones, which employ the majority of the workers, will not be able to sustain this onslaught. The

"WE SHOULD HAVE KEPT THE SENIORS HOME, CLOSED PUBLIC SPACES, AND ALLOWED THE REST OF US TO KEEP LIFE MOVING FORWARD"

"WE CAN DO LITTLE BUT SUPPORT, TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY, DEALERS WITH INTEREST-FREE CREDIT, AND SUPPLIERS WITH PAYMENTS"

bigger ones can hold out for a while. The most sensible thing to do would be to recalibrate this unnecessary lockdown as soon as possible.

How are you planning to support

your dealers, component suppliers, and the distribution system, which are going through severe crises?
We can do little other than support, to the best of our ability, dealers with interest-free credit and suppliers with payments. That is our plan.

How are you addressing the export market because a large percentage of your sales comes from abroad and that those markets are also impacted?
All exports have come to a standstill owing to this arbitrary lockdown.

What are the lessons from this on the way one should do business after this?
The same, timeless wisdom: Stay focused. Conserve your resources and ignore the herd mentality. Keep building herd immunity in your business and in yourselves.