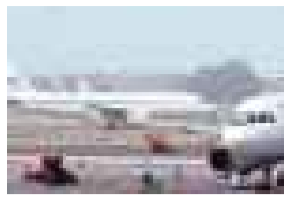


## Air Deccan ceases ops, staff on 'sabbatical without pay'



Air Deccan has suspended its operations and put all its employees on a sabbatical without pay. Air Deccan, India's first low cost airline, resumed service as a regional service operator in 2017. A year later, GSEC-Monarch picked up 50 per cent stake in the airline and it served four destinations within Gujarat. Currently, it has only Beechcraft 1900D aircraft in its fleet. "In view of the recent global and domestic issues and subsequent directive issued by the Indian regulator Air Deccan has no choice but to cease operations until further notice," the airline's CEO Arun Kumar Singh said a mail to staff.

**ANEESH PHADNIS**

## HCL Tech sets up Covid-19 control centre in Noida



HCL Technologies has set up a control centre for the Gautam Buddha Nagar district administration to help respond to citizens' queries about coronavirus. The Integrated Control Centre has been set up by HCL at one of its facilities in Noida with support from the district administration, police, health department and Noida as well as Greater Noida Authority, the IT firm said.

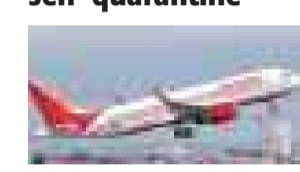
**PTI**

## MG Motor India in talks with firms to make ventilators, says MG Motor India

MG Motor India is in talks with three medical device makers, including GE, to produce ventilators at its Halol facility to help meet demand during the coronavirus pandemic, according to a company official. The company is also developing its own ventilator and hopes to be ready with a prototype within a week as part of its three-pronged approach to get into ventilator manufacturing.

**PTI**

## Al asks passengers of four flights to self-quarantine



Air India has asked passengers who travelled in four of its flights in March to follow necessary isolation or quarantine after three passengers on those flights tested positive for coronavirus. Two of those flights were from Goa to Mumbai, one from Mumbai to Delhi and another from Delhi to Patna.

**PTI**

## Lockdown to impact Q1, likely to hit Q2 also, says Godrej

The three-week long lockdown will impact earnings of FMCG sector in April-June quarter, and it is not clear if it will linger to the second quarter, according to a Godrej Consumer top official. Though Godrej Consumer Product is ramping up its manufacturing and distribution network for the essential items, but it is still facing 'bottleneck' in logistics and transportation.

**PTI**

## Telemedicine Society kicks off orientation for doctors

The Telemedicine Society of India (TSI) has launched an online orientation programme to sensitise the medical community about it. TSI, in concurrence with NITI Aayog and the Medical Council of India, has launched the pan-India effort which has seen an enrolment of nearly 10,000 doctors till now.

**BS REPORTER**

## Tele-consultations pick up as patients avoid hospitals

As the nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19 continues to cripple normal life, an increasing number of patients are preferring to consult with the doctors over video and audio calls. This is also promoting an increasing number of hospitals and clinics to invest in technology infrastructure for establishing tele-consultation units.

ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the use of remote health consultation can be an effective way of triaging potential cases and also can serve as a form of first line of defense, while keeping frontline healthcare staff safe unless there is an urgent need for immediate medical attention/treatment," said Raviganesh Venkataraman, CEO, Cloudnine Group of Hospitals.

The Cloudnine Group of Hospitals, a maternity, child-care and fertility care group of hospitals has announced the launch of its tele-consultation service with doctors. This service has been made available across Gurgaon, Noida, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Pune, Bengaluru and Chennai units of Cloudnine. "It's our Baby," a dedicated app built for the purpose, currently has one lakh users. "In the wake the

Given the strict travel conditions even within cities, several large hospitals in big centres are also working at reduced capacity. Max Super-specialty Saket and Moolchand Medicity in New Delhi, for example, are both working with very little staff, with only essential and chronic patients' departments working full time.

**PEERZADA ABRAR & NEHA ALAWADHI**

# Several may lose jobs, says CEO snap poll

**SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY**  
New Delhi, 5 April

The coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent nationwide lockdown have deeply impacted the domestic economy, with a majority of firms expecting a significant decline in their top line and bottom line in the current and previous quarters, demand declining and jobs getting impacted, according to a CEOs' Snap Poll conducted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The electronic survey saw a cross-country participation of close to 200 CEOs across sectors and indicated that a significant majority of firms expect revenues to fall more than 10 per cent and profits to decline more than 5 per cent in both the current quarter (Apr-Jun 2020) as well as the preceding quarter (Jan-Mar 2020).

The expectations of this sharp decline in both revenue and profit growth by domestic firms could foretell the significant impact of this outbreak on GDP growth.

Further, most firms (80 per cent) have claimed that their inventory was lying idle. However, more than 40 per cent of the firms expect their stocks to last beyond a month once the lockdown ends — indicating the firms' expectations of a demand slowdown in the post lockdown period.

During this lockdown, a majority of the firms engaging in production of essential products and supply of ancillary goods are facing constrained operations in production and supply of essential goods and services. Firms have revealed that access to manpower and movement of products have emerged as major constraints in essentials trade, be it

**"The government could announce a fiscal stimulus package for the industry and implement it on a fast-track mode, given that the sudden imposition of the lockdown has significantly impacted industry operations and the uncertainty of a recovery threatens substantial loss of livelihoods going forward"**  
**CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE,**  
Director General, CII



manufacturing or warehousing & transport or retail sales of these essential commodities. While the government has allowed manufacture, transportation and distribution

of essentials, the enforcement at the local level has implemented the lockdown on essential commodities as well as services. On the jobs front, about 52 per

cent of the firms foresee job losses, in their respective sectors, resulting from the impact of Covid-19 outbreak and the ensuing lockdown. While the proportion of jobs that are expected to be cut are quite staggering, a significant share of firms polled (47 per cent) expect less than 15 per cent job loss, CII said. However, a worryingly high 32 per cent of firms expect to shed about 15-30 per cent of jobs, once the lockdown ends.

"The government could announce a fiscal stimulus package and implement it on fast-track mode, given that the lockdown has significantly impacted industry operations and the uncertainty of a recovery threatens substantial loss of livelihoods going forward", said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII.

# Corporate India prepares for life after the lockdown

**SURAJEET DAS GUPTA**  
New Delhi, 5 April

What's worked during the lockdown and what hasn't? Can what's worked become a permanent feature of the workplace? Are there any unexpected positive outcomes? What lessons can be extrapolated and applied in future? As the corporate world tries to answer these questions, it's clear that one feature — working from home — has been a success.

So much so that Japanese automotive paints company Nippon Paint (India), as it prepares for life once the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak slows down, is closing its sales office in Mumbai.

The Gurugram-headquartered company, with marquee clients like Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors, has been so surprised by the success of the 'work from home' rule that it is thinking of asking staff at other locations to continue working from home too or go in for co-working space. Both measures will save high rental costs.

Nippon Paint (India) is also planning to reduce the number of warehouses, even if it means a slight delay in delivering its products. To strengthen health and safety in its three factories, it may opt for professional sanitation companies instead of depending on its in-house team.

The social distancing imperative has prompted the company to consider rejigging shifts, so that there is no overlap of workmen between two shifts. Said Sharad Malhotra, president, automotive refinishes and wood coatings: "There is no doubt that business and the way we run manufacturing will change fundamentally for corporates and manufacturers after Covid."

If not closing offices, other companies are looking at shrinking them. The chairman of a leading Mumbai-based conglomerate with interests in autos, financial services, hospitality, defence, and information technology (IT), has asked his business chief executive officers (CEOs) to consider the following: Can employees in departments such as marketing and sales or departments, where there is no strict need to work from the office, can come in on alternate days to save rental costs?

Top managers across broad swathes of industry are busy on video calls and emails to rework their business strategies, products, and standard operating procedures in manufacturing units for a post-Covid world. "It is not about the lockdown being lifted. The key for us is to prepare workers for a completely different standard operating procedure, with many health and safety measures that are here to stay," said R C Bhargava, chairman, Maruti Suzuki.

Many manufacturing companies, anticipating mandatory directions from the government after the lockdown has been eased, are already taking measures such as installing thermal scanners and

## HOW COMPANIES PLAN TO TAKE THEIR BUSINESS FORWARD

- ▶ **Shrink the office** with 'work from home' success
- ▶ **Localise production** to reduce costs
- ▶ **Use more automation** in factories
- ▶ **Mandate thermal screening** in factories
- ▶ **Rejig your product** offering by, say, making taxi rides safer
- ▶ **Preserve cash**, postpone cash flows, reduce marketing costs, travel, entertainment, etc
- ▶ **Change strategy** of employee engagement
- ▶ **Revise business continuity plans**



**"We have a significant amount of cash in our balance sheet and we are reviewing all our cash sources and payables. All non-essential expenses have been stopped"**  
**MADHAVAN MENON,**  
Thomas Cook India CMD

**"We are working on designing some special purpose machines, which will ensure manual operations are eliminated and productivity is increased"**  
**VIMAL KEJRIWAL,**  
KEC International CEO

reworking the pre-start-up check list. Before any machine is turned on, a longer health checklist list will have to be observed. They are also looking at more automation and a push for localisation. Said KEC International CEO Vimal Kejriwal: "We are working on designing some special purpose machines, which will ensure manual operations are eliminated and increase productivity." An auto industry CEO said: "It might not be good news for employment, but automation will increase productivity and give more flexibility to us — if workers migrate suddenly or, as social distancing becomes a norm, if workers don't come at all. Localisation instead of importing will reduce costs. Everyone has to do a balancing act."

In the services sector, companies are reworking their product to make it safer. Transport aggregator Uber India is considering tweaking its cars. Perhaps add some roof-to-floor plastic sheeting to cordon off drivers and protect them? A mandatory protocol for sanitising the car, including hand sanitiser, for customers.

"We are doing pilot runs on 150 vehicles which are restricted now for the exclusive use of health workers. We are still working on how to scale it for over 200,000 vehicles after the lockdown is lifted and individuals want to move around safely," said Pradeep Parameswaran, president, Uber, India and South Asia.

Employee engagement will also change. Fast-moving consumer goods major Nestlé India is learning from its experiences in China. Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) Suresh Narayanan says working from home, while it has advantages, can also lead to stress and anxiety in some people who feel isolated. Nestlé has rolled out 'virtual' engage-

ment programmes, training programmes, mental health initiatives, free advisory calls with accredited doctors, and even check-in programmes for young employees who live alone or far from home. These programmes will continue even after the lockdown is lifted.

The more immediate challenge, however, is what can be done to cope with a certain slowdown or recession. Top CEOs are devising blueprints. The key, for the moment, is conserving cash. Said Thomas Cook India's CMD Maddhavan Menon: "We have a good amount of cash in our balance sheet and we are reviewing all our cash sources and payables. All non-essential expenses have been stopped to conserve cash." The chairman of a leading conglomerate with interests ranging from tyres to IT, has sent a note to top managers highlighting key areas: Take all profit and loss hits, but postpone cash outflows, be ultra-sensitive to marketing costs as consumers are busy with survival, use all statutory concessions, review foreign exchange cover closely, don't dodge associates, i.e., vendors and suppliers with whom we have contracts, re-examine all contracts, convert bonus targets to cash, go slow on capex, and modify offerings to fit the current situation. Business continuity plans are also being reviewed as they had obviously not factored in a pandemic. Jignesh Thakkar, global compliance solution leader at EY India, said that companies will want to plug any deficiencies caused by various factors such as timelines of action, lack of infrastructure, labour shortages or external environment issues.

"Firms will then want to put in new internal guidelines based on the lessons learnt as well as solid contingency plans to respond to future crises," said Thakkar.

Inputs by Aneesh Phadnis, Arnab Dutta, Sudipto Dey, Amritha Pillay

# Hotel chains do their bit to fight Covid pandemic

**PAVAN LALL**  
Mumbai, 5 April

Hotel chains across the country are rallying resources to support local authorities, medical teams, and those in need of basics such as food and medicine. In some cases, companies are even taking hotel supplies and using them for personal protection.

Ajay Bakaya, MD at Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, says: "We are taking fresh linen from half a dozen properties and those are being made into masks."

Sarovar is operating 14 of its 83 properties because of a national vacuum in business, but is dishing out 500 free meals a day in Chandigarh at its Hometel property.

Similarly, Tata-owned Indian Hotels (IHCL) has dedicated resources to feed migrant workers.

"The Taj Mahal Palace, Taj Lands End, Taj Santacruz, The President and Ginger MIDC Andheri in Mumbai; and Ginger Madgaon and Ginger City Centre, Noida, are offering rooms free of charge to the medical fraternity," an IHCL spokesperson said. Four other Ginger hotels are also being used for quarantine purposes, and include the ones in Bhubaneswar, Faridabad, Bengaluru, and Andheri to accommodate medical workers. In addition, IHCL is distributing meals cooked by the TajSats to colleges (Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi) and seven hospitals in the NCR.

Marriott International, the world's largest hotel chain, is driving on-ground assistance in a bid to help flatten the curve of the spread of the virus and support local government.

The JW Marriott Aerocity, New Delhi, and the Westin Gurgaon are distributing

cooked meals, with as many as 500 packed meal boxes being distributed every day. The Delhi hotel has distributed close to 5,000 boxes to date.

In Maharashtra, hit hardest by coronavirus so far, the JW Marriott, Pune, the Ritz Carlton and the Marriott Pune Hinjewadi, in collaboration with the Panchshil Foundation, are distributing "Care Packages" across the city. The package contains 1 kg rice, 750 gm lentil, 1 litre of cooking oil and six eggs.

Marriott is aiming to distribute 30,000 packets through the city collector's office in Pune. Vijay Dewan, managing director, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels, says: "Amidst the current lockdown the senior citizens and the underprivileged suffer the most."

The Park Hotels has launched a neighbourhood service initiative, by which everyone can ask for groceries, medicine, or food, and a team responds to the request immediately. "Locals can directly call these hotels for any emergencies or any pharmaceutical needs, and the concierge of the hotel will help them get those," he says.

"All these hotels are centrally located and anyone living within the 5 km can avail of this service, available 24X7, with no additional charges." Europe's biggest hotel chain, the Accor Group, through its hotel Ibis New Delhi Aerocity is extending its assistance as a quarantine facility.

Zubin Saxena, managing director and vice-president (operations), South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, says, along with their partners, his company is collectively reaching out to some 20,000 beneficiaries per day with food and food supplies.

## HELPING HAND

- HOTEL CHAIN/services offered**
  - MARRIOTT: Daily meals, Care Packages**
  - IHCL: Free meals, quarantine support, free rooms for medical authorities**
  - APEEJAY SURRENDRA PARK HOTELS: Neighborhood delivery, food packages, free rooms for medical staff**
  - ACCOR: Quarantine facility for Delhi Ibis**
  - RADISSON HOTEL GROUP: Food services, free daily meals**
  - Sarovar Hotels & Resorts: Masks, free meals**
- Source: Companies

# Private insurers want standard rates for Covid-19 treatment

**SUBRATA PANDA & SOHINI DAS**  
Mumbai, 5 April

As claims from Covid-19 patients start to flow, private insurers are pushing for standardisation of treatment costs on the lines of diagnostics. Hospitals, on the other hand, claim that it would be impossible to operate under a price-fixed treatment protocol, as each case requires different treatment given the individual's accompanying illnesses.

So far, the number of claims handled by the private insurers from Covid-19 patients has been fairly less. Insurers related claims have just started trickling in. Haryana has already indicated Ayushman Bharat rates be followed by private hospitals to treat Covid-19 patients. Sources claimed Maharashtra, too, was mulling a pricing advisory for treatment of general patients. Cost of the diagnostic test for Covid-19 has been fixed at ₹4,500 per test by the government. Hospitals, however, do not think this is feasible. "The cost of protective gear itself would be more than that. If we compromise on protecting our health care staff, we eventually

compromise the health for our patients. We would not do that," said one Karnataka-based hospital chain. Karnataka is treat patients at government hospitals. If anyone turns up at private hospitals, they are diverted to the public facilities.

Priya Gilbile, chief operating officer of ManipalCigna Health Insurance that has handled three confirmed cases, said the initial estimates are averaging around ₹2 lakh. "Currently, Covid-19 treatment costs are open-ended and on a fee-for-service model. We are hoping that as the diagnostic test charges in private labs are pre-fixed and standardised, the treatment costs will undergo some consideration. We are speaking to the government to see if the treatment costs can be standardised and bundled in private hospitals, similar to the diagnostic testing," she said.

Gilbile said they were experiencing a large number respiratory infection cases that were being treated in line with Covid-19 regimen. "Even with most of the cases turning out negative, the cost incurred during the interim phase leads to overall increase in cost of treatment," she said.



Hospitals say price-capped packages would be difficult to work out for the disease

For example, the charges for isolation rooms are twice as much as regular rooms. Prasun Kumar Sikdar, the chief executive of the private hospital chain, which has handled less than a dozen cases so far, said that the cost of treating even the most general patient of Covid-19 (one who does not have any

accompanied illness like heart, lung, kidney, or cancer, diabetes, etc) is also high, given the protective gear the caregivers have to wear.

"Most of the isolation rooms in our hospitals have been carved out of the larger suit rooms. Even if we don't charge the normal rates for these rooms, a

standard single room charge, too, is higher than a bed in a ward. Moreover, the nurses, ward boys, and doctors all need to wear protective gear and each one costs ₹1,800 or so. They need to change this gear every four hours and we have worked out the requirement which is roughly 2.5 protective personal equipment (PPE) per patient per day," the CEO said.

He added that another reason for the high costs is that the average length of stay (ALOS) in this case is much longer — 14 days, in comparison to 3-3.5 days ALOS in hospitals. Even an angioplasty (a cardiac procedure) patient is discharged in three days or so, according to hospitals.

Insurers acknowledge the cost of protective gear required in Covid-19 cases. However, they want a uniform code to be set. Subrata Mondal, executive vice-president of IFFCO Tokio General Insurance, said that as of now there is no medical protocol that could be followed for levying uniform charges. "There may be charges for protecting health care staff like PPEs and other requirements to avert the spread. We hope the concerned authorities will design appropriate

protocols," he said. Mondal said they were soon going to launch a product that would specifically cover coronavirus-related illnesses. "The policy will be much cheaper and such additional expenses may be covered under the policy, including both quarantine and hospitalisation expenses."

As such the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) had mandated all health and general insurance companies to offer a standard product called the Arogya Sanjeevani policy. Around 29 insurers now offer this product that comes with a maximum sum assured of ₹5 lakh. Insurers have also seen huge traction for health policies ever since the pandemic broke out and the IRDAI said that all health policies will have to cover the cost of Covid-19 treatment. In the Arogya Sanjeevani policy, room rent is capped at 2 per cent or a maximum sum of ₹5,000 per day and intensive care unit charges at 5 per cent (or ₹10,000 max per day).

Private hospitals say that given the ALOS, average cost for a Covid-19 patient would run into ₹7-8 lakh.