

As lockdown-like curbs ease, India Inc limps back to work, but with caution

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Focus is to get staff vaccinated rather than ask them to return to office

Unlike the unlocking after the first wave, when India Inc vocally pushed the government to ease restrictions so that they could return to work, this time around, corporates have been fairly muted.

And as several States eased lockdown-like restrictions, India Inc is showing caution, focussing more on getting their employees vaccinated than getting them into offices.

“There is not a single client of ours who is availing of government concessions of allowing 50 per cent attendance – the highest we are seeing is 33 per cent, others even less,” says Major Manjit Rajain, Global Chairman, Tenon Group, which does the facilities management for Nirlon Knowledge Park, and several corporate offices as well as manufacturing units.

In Kolkata, Harsha V Agarwal, Director, Emami, said: “Attendance at office is totally flexible and only on need basis.” He said that plant operations were not hampered during lockdown.

Manufacturing

While some companies – especially the FMCG firms – had an uninterrupted production run during April and May, others have resumed manufacturing activities this month, albeit at only half the capacity.

Rajesh Goel, Sr Vice-President, Marketing and Sales, Honda Cars India, which resumed production this month, said the company is operating at less than 50 per cent of the daily production output that it had before the second wave hit the country. “This is planned to gradually ramp up from next month. We have also committed ourselves to an accelerated pace

of vaccination, facilitating camps and encouraging associates to get themselves vaccinated,” he says.

Manish Sharma, President and CEO of durables major, Panasonic India & SA, said: “We started operations on a small scale in the first week of June in our appliances factory with production of molding and sheet metal along with maintenance measures. As of today, we are running at 50 per cent capacity with more emphasis on refrigerator and washing machine lines.”

Sharma says Panasonic has vaccinated nearly 80 per cent of its employees till date, and the remaining will get their jobs soon.

Blue Star MD, B Thiagarajan, said the company’s production levels were not curtailed by the second wave as it was allowed to continue producing. “What, however, did dampen production levels was the build-up in inventory due to decrease in demand during our peak summer sale season. For now, production levels are just as normal as before and 75 per cent of our staff and families are vaccinated. Plans to accelerate the production is for much later during the festival seasoning,” he said.

Demand grows

Most companies, including Tata Motors and Maruti Suzuki, said they will ramp up production as the demand grows in the coming days.

In Telangana, the ₹20,000-crore seed industry is gearing up for life after unlocking. While many companies have decided to let their staff work from home, some others are asking their employees to come on alternate days.

Banks are focussing more on vaccinating staff. According to a senior official of Union Bank of India, which is also the convener of State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) of Andhra Pradesh, employees of all banks in Andhra Pradesh had taken at least the first dose of vaccination.

Meanwhile, in Tamil Nadu, a cross section of corporates that BusinessLine spoke to, said that the State government’s latest guidelines do not permit full re-opening and that they will wait for the relaxations to take effect fully.

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