

# Booster shot: India Inc plans Covid-19 jabs for staff, families

To help employees as vaccination is not covered, as part of the health insurance, under OPD policy

## OUR BUREAUS

New Delhi/Mumbai, April 21

Following the Centre's decision to allow partial sale of the Covid-19 vaccines in the open market, India Inc has started chalking out plans to get its staff and their immediate families inoculated against the novel coronavirus.

Many corporates, including Amazon India, Biocon, Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB), Nestlé India, and Tech Mahindra, said they would give free Covid-19 vaccine shots to their employees and their family members. But some feel there is a need for more clarity on availability and pricing of the vaccines.

The government on Monday decided to allow the domestic vaccine makers to sell 50 per cent of their vaccine stocks directly to States as well as in the open market and remove age re-

striction to make vaccination possible for all adult Indians. Amazon India, for instance, has the grandiose plan of vaccinating over 10 lakh people. The e-commerce behemoth will cover not only its staff but also those associated with its stock, logistics and delivery operations and their immediate family members.

The Biocon Group said it would provide free vaccine shots to employees and their families.

Tech Mahindra has already partnered with Fortis Healthcare, for the first phase of its exclusive vaccination drive for its associates and families.

InterGlobe, which operates IndiGo Airlines, on the other hand, is getting a 12-15 member specialist team from Gurugram-based Medanta, for manning a sponsored vaccination drive for its employees and their kin.

Hindustan Coca-Cola is already working closely with government healthcare teams for offering vaccination for those in the 45-59 age group in some of its plants.

Nestlé India too said it would



Companies feel that there is a need for more clarity on availability, pricing of vaccines

set up vaccination camps at its manufacturing locations in collaboration with authorities, said its CMD Suresh Narayanan.

Arvind Mediratta, MD & CEO, Metro Cash and Carry India, said that in recognition of the spirit of its employees, the firm would cover the vaccination cost of all its employees. Firms like Jindal Stainless, automotive industry majors like Hero Moto-Corp, TVS Motor Company and ZF India, too, said they would cover the cost of vaccination for their on-roll employees, as well as contract and dealer staffs.

## Insurance issue

This may prove beneficial for

the employees as vaccination is not covered as part of health insurance for those who do not opt for OPD (Out Patient Department) cover in their policies.

TA Ramalingam, Chief Technical Officer, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, said, "Covid-19 related medical treatments after contraction of the virus is already covered under our health insurance policies."

If the insured has opted for Covid-specific policies such as 'Corona Kavach', then the insured will be eligible for hospitalisation expenses along with home quarantine and daily cash benefits as well.

"Inoculation is a preventive measure for which hospitalisation is not required but it will be covered under OPD if it is available under the policy," he said adding that "we will act as per the guidance of the regulator."

As regards corporates, Aseem Chawla, Managing Partner, ASC Legal, said, "From an income tax deductibility point of view, it would be interesting to note whether such expenditure is regarded as incurred for the purposes of business and hence allowed for tax purposes."