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● **INTERVIEW: TAPAN SINGHEL, MD & CEO, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance**

## 'Digitisation has taken centre stage to service customers'

*Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company (BAGIC) recorded its highest annual profit after tax of ₹999 crore in FY20, a 28% YoY growth. The insurer's solvency ratio stood at 254%. Gross written premium rose 15.6% to ₹12,833 crore in FY20. Looking ahead, Tapan Singhel, MD & CEO, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company, said FY21 would be a comparatively slower year. The motor insurance business was affected after customers were allowed more time to pay renewal premiums for policies expiring after May 24 and drop in new vehicle sales. The company will look at growing the retail health business because there is a large demand in that space considering the increase in awareness about its importance due to Covid-19, he tells Geeta Nair in an interview. Edited excerpts:*

**What has been the impact of Covid-19 disruption on BAGIC's business. How will the next three quarters be?**

The insurance industry may not see a predominant growth in business owing to the current scenario but we also don't envisage a sharp decline. I feel this financial year will be a comparatively slower year for the industry as a whole in terms of business as you can't expect the business to be back to normal in an instant. As the

lockdown gradually eases in our country, business revival will be the focus.

**How has Covid-19 impacted the health insurance business?**

With Covid-19 came in an uptake from consumers on health insurance products, many opting for the standalone Covid-19 insurance products as well. In my opinion, customers should look at buying a comprehensive health insurance policy which provides better coverage, appropriate sum insured with requisite add-ons considering these unprecedented events rather than just a coronavirus protection cover. Although there is a difference in the premium between a standalone and comprehensive health products but you get more coverage and higher sum insured as well. Buying a health insurance policy is important and should be a part of financial planning especially with the increase in the unprecedented health concerns and at the same time rise in health care costs.

**How is the company making the digital shift in its business?**

In terms of Covid, digitisation has certainly taken centre stage to service our customers. In the period from March 19 to April 30, 2020, we saw digital sales go up by



around 86%. We issued 1,430,794 policies and processed 862,874 during this period. We currently have 100% capability in managing claims, renewals and new business through our internal in-house IT infrastructure. Insurance is considered essential services and hence we have ensured our IT infrastructure is in place to manage our overall business. For two-wheeler and three-wheeler claims, we have chatbots in place, we have our app and other different digital initiative to solve these customer worries. We have also proactively reached out to customers through email, Whatsapp, personalised calls and SMSs to ensure that digital solutions and assistance has been provided to them and their insurance problems have

been taken care off. Customers can download and connect to the company's Caringly Yours App to avail our products and services, make a claim, buy a new policy or renew existing one, to change address, contact number or email ID, locate a nearby network hospital or network garage. Online status check for policy issuance, claims and grievance recording options are also available.

**There is a shift to digital across all businesses but with this comes security concerns. Can cyber insurance products offer protection?**

Cyber security could be a possible threat impacting consumers at this time since we are increasingly exposed to the prolonged use of technology for accessing our daily needs and for people working from home as well. A cyber insurance policy covers all cyber risks impacting an individual arising out of any of the devices you use that are connected to the internet or any network which includes your phone, your laptop and common devices like the home desktop or a smart home device. This policy could help safeguard for such a threat. Typically such a policy will cover risks such as identity theft, malware attack and cyber stalking and covers financial losses resulting from being an innocent victim of e-mail spoofing, phish-

ing, IT theft and cyber extortion.

**What will be the impact of supercyclone in West Bengal and Odisha on claims?**

We are at a very nascent stage to talk about claims but we are seeing claim intimations and will settle them ensuring that our customers are financial supported through these challenging times. BAGIC has already issued advisories to our customers on how to reach us and manage their damages. Natural calamities come unannounced and are increasing year-on-year. Hence, insurance covers like comprehensive motor insurance, property insurance, fire insurance, home insurance, cover your assets against losses due to cyclones, floods, earthquake etc. and must be integral to one's financial planning. However, it is critical to have an insurance cover in place beforehand as insurance only covers unpredictable losses. We typically see a surge in insurance queries after a region is hit with the unknown natural disaster. However, the numbers reduce overtime owing to the reduced impact of the disaster. I would recommend consumers, especially ones staying in natural calamity susceptible regions to consider buying the requisite insurance policies to be financially secured in case of any such uncertainties and live a life of dignity.