IT sector outlines the protocol for staggered return to office work

Romita Majumdar

romita.m@livemint.com

MUMBAI

Debjani Ghosh of Nasscom says firms are modelling out the workforce mix they need.

While the ministry of home affairs directive on opening up the economy in a phased manner says 50% of the IT sector can go back to work with adequate safety measures in place, industry body Nasscom said the industry must take a phased approach with 15-20% workforce in Phase 1 as part of the standard operation procedure.

The sector is not pushing employees to return to work yet, but in case they have to, companies are following strict guidelines. The bigger concern is in ensuring businesses have some measure of liquidity that can be aided by tax refunds and policy relief, while employees continue to work from home, said industry leaders.

"Companies are modelling out the workforce mix that they need on premise because their productivity has been fine while working from home. We are looking at a staggered approach with 10-15% back to work by end of May-June and, depending on the criticality, up to 20-25% for IT services. For BPM services, it is likely to be 15-30%," said Debjani Ghosh, president, Nasscom.

A bigger concern is resuming functions for the night shifts, which service key markets, including North America and New Zealand. "This is particularly relevant for smaller companies that employ around 100 people and may not be able to provide employees with enough work-from-home infrastructure. This is also why it is important for the

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government to process any held-up payment for these companies which are already struggling with demand," said Ghosh.

While there are concerns over downloading the government's Aarogya Setu app for contact tracing, the sector is largely concerned with ensuring accountability and employee safety. "People need to have the app to travel safely to work, so the industry accepts it. We have trained employees on the various scenarios that they can expect during the journey and while they are in office, in terms of health and safety checks. We have to be respectful of the required processes to ensure everyone's safety," said Keshav Murugesh, CEO, WNS.

"It is also important to make sure that businesses are allowed to thrive in the new normal. That requires efficient telecom and fibre infrastructure so that people can continue to be productive from home. Ensure that power supply is dependable and infrastructure investment is done right," said Jagdish Mitra, chief strategy officer and head of growth, Tech Mahindra.