

Apply strict safety norms, not lockdown: CEOs' poll

Partial lockdown measures may impact movement of labour & goods, they say

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New Delhi, 11 April

India should focus on protecting livelihoods, along with lives, in its fight against the pandemic, and industrial activity should be kept out of partial lockdown's ambit, said a poll of chief executive officers (CEOs) conducted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Micro containment strategies, along with Covid-19-appropriate behaviour, are an effective attempt to contain the spread of the second wave of infections, the CII said.

Partial lockdown could affect the movement of labour and goods, which would affect industrial production, the poll said.

About 56 per cent of the 75 CEOs polled expressed concern over loss of up to 50 per cent production if the movement of goods was restricted. Around 68 per cent of the CEOs polled represented micro, small, and medium enterprises.

Industry is prepared and equipped for implementing stricter health and safety protocols and "stringent implementation of safety norms was opined to be better than the option of partial lockdowns by 93 per cent of the CEOs polled", the industry body said.

"Industry is keen to work with the government on universal coverage (18 years and above) of vaccination programme and in implementing strict health and safety protocols", said TV Narendran, president-designate at the CII.

Around 57 per cent of the companies expressed the need to stock raw materials in excess of just-in-time levels to meet any likely shortage, and 31 per cent said they would accommodate their labour force in the factory in the case of movement restrictions due to night curfew.

More than 60 per cent of the CEOs suggested allowing movements of workers in all shifts during night curfews and also free movements of goods.

This should be allowed with all workers and industry staff strictly, following all health and safety protocols, a statement by the CII said.



IN NUMBERS

75% CEOs say the nation should also focus on protecting livelihoods along with lives in its fight against Covid-19

68% CEOs polled represented micro, small, and medium enterprises

56% expressed their

concern over loss of up to half of production if movement of goods is restricted

57% companies expressed the need to stock raw materials in excess of just-in-time levels to meet any likely shortage of raw materials

31% industry leaders said

they would accommodate their labour force in the factory in case of movement restrictions due to night curfew

60% CEOs polled suggested allowing movement of workers in all shifts during night curfews along with free movement of goods

"The government handled both lives and livelihoods effectively during the first wave. It could do so again by keeping industrial activities out of the ambit of partial lockdowns aimed at restricting social gatherings. This will help India recover from the economic contraction and stabilise the upward growth trends being currently witnessed in several sectors," said Narendran.

The body has also urged member companies and industry to consider vaccinating the eligible workforce at the workplace.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting measures to minimise the contraction of virus

instead of night curfew or lockdown.

The traders' body suggested that a lockdown was not a solution since trade and commerce was struggling to recover from the losses of the previous one.

Steps are needed to stop the increase in Covid-19 cases, and economic activity should continue by observing safety protocols in a strict manner, the body said. It suggested different timings for offices and markets. Government and private offices may work from 8 am to 2pm whereas markets may be allowed to function from 11am to 5 pm, the body suggested.

Banks and other financial institutions may be allowed to work from 9 am to 3 pm, helping in staggered movements of people.