

Companies trying hard to make office premises Covid-safe

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Synopsis

Developers, facility management firms devise and implement plans to meet Covid protocols and minimise the chances of virus spread.

Realty developers and facility management firms are gearing up to meet the strict Covid-19 protocols at workplaces as large technology firms and commercial parks expect a faster resumption of office operations this time as against previous attempts over the last two years.

While companies have already started opening offices across the country in a staggered manner, they are now expediting the pace as concerns over the Omicron variant have subsided significantly.

From sanitizing high-touch areas frequently to introducing contactless doors and elevators, developers and facility management firms are trying to eliminate all chances of virus spread. They are also bolstering traditional desks by introducing technology-aided features, including robotics and wearables, to welcome the employees at workplaces.

"Corporates and IT/ITeS industry is gearing to ramp up the employee count at office in the next couple of months and the industry is likely to see around 60% of the workforce back in office by the fourth quarter of 2022," said Sameer Saxena, general secretary, Global Association of Corporate Services, which represents over 6,000 corporate real estate professionals across the country. "This time, the companies are expecting acceptance of the back-to-office at an improved pace."

A few developers and facility management firms are also offering meditation, apart from gyms and gaming rooms, to give people the space to disengage from the relentless demands on their faculties and focus on their wellness, even when they are at work.



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Hands on Deck

KEY INITIATIVES...

- 1 Touchless management of common areas
- 2 Dedicated medical facilities
- 3 Isolation chambers
- 4 MERV filters for cleaner air
- 5 Automated RFID-based vehicle management system

More than **50%** of India's tech workforce could return to office three times a week from Jan

Some companies extended WFH policies until March first week

Work from office to see acceleration this time as against earlier waves



"As we welcome companies back to work across 47 million sq ft of our office portfolio in India, we have ensured business continuity for tenants, with elevated health, safety and sustainability standards," said Alok Aggarwal, MD, Brookfield Properties India. "With the changing landscape of work and the workforce, we have utilized this period for a national-level asset upgrade programme so that 400,000 employees working at our offices are back to well-amenitised campuses and business parks with green open spaces that promote collaboration and well-being."

Touchless management of common areas, dedicated medical facilities and isolation chambers to MERV filters for cleaner air and automated RFID-based vehicle management system are among key initiatives undertaken by Brookfield.

Co-working firm Simpliwork has seen a fairly robust demand and supply in the last two quarters of 2021 as mid and large-sized organizations chalked their plan to resume work from office.

"We are also trying to introduce more greenery into our interiors while designing our workspaces to relieve people of the quarantine fatigue and the stress induced by high exposure to computer and mobile screens," said Kunal Walia, co-founder of Simpliwork.

Plans to return to work had been thrown off course by the Omicron threat, forcing companies to extend work-from-home (WFH) policies until March first week. Some IT firms had aimed to step up office attendance in January-March this year, but were stymied by the third wave.

"Health and safety have become crucial, now more than ever, after the world has faced a pandemic," said Vinod Rohira, CEO, Mindspace Business Parks REIT. "Our primary focus has been on air quality management, public spaces, emergency protocols and enhancing amenities and recreation to deliver the best user experience. The well-being of our tenants

is at the core of our initiatives, resulting in upgrades of all public areas to deliver the best user experience."

Google terminates lease deal with Vatika over 'delay'
