

# Back to the office: Tata Steel, JSW chalk out new policies

Tata Steel to let employees choose between WFH and office; JSW Steel looks at dispersed workplaces

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## NO CONSENSUS

Four months into the 'unlocking' exercise and amid rising hopes of a vaccine being developed, the country's largest steelmakers, Tata Steel and JSW Steel, are chalking out policies for workplace and workforce.

Tata Steel is coming out with a new policy effective November that will allow employees to choose between working from home and office. JSW Steel is considering a distributed workplace strategy from the next financial year.

T V Narendran, managing director and chief executive, Tata Steel, said, "We are coming out with some new policies effective from November 1, which we will try for a year. It will give people a lot of flexibility to decide." Details of the policy are not yet known.

At Tata Steel, employees have been working from home, except when "essential". Narendran, too, has been going to office intermit-



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Joint MD & group CFO, JSW Steel

tently, only when needed.

For JSW Steel, a combination of strategies has been at play — some are going to office, some on a rotational basis, and others are

working from home. The leadership — Sajjan Jindal (chairman), Seshagiri Rao (joint managing director and group chief financial officer), Jayant Acharya (director

of commercial & marketing) — however, have been going to office from June 1. "We do not want to continue the work-from-home policy for long. We are thinking of rearranging the working system starting April 1," said Rao.

The rearrangement focusses on reducing the number of people in the Mumbai office and creating hubs across the country. So, there could be a commercial hub that has people doing work from one location and a finance hub that would have people from that department working from a single location. "Discussions are going on. The feedback that we have from employees is that the preference is to come to office," explained Rao.

It's not just JSW Steel and Tata Steel that are rethinking their strategies. According to sources close to development, Vedanta and Aditya Birla group companies were also chalking out new work policies, but refused to divulge details.

Viral Thakker, partner at Deloitte India, said, "The common

model being considered is to have multiple teams, alternatively coming into office and working from home. A distributed set of offices make sense and that's something that firms are considering. They are also discovering the power of working out of tier-2 and 3 cities where commute time is lesser."

Many companies are discovering that WFH is not a permanent solution and the water cooler chat is irreplaceable. As Rao said, people at JSW work as a team and that adds to a common purpose. "A WFH culture will not be able to bind them together," he said.

Real estate in Mumbai is expensive and having a distributed strategy might not be feasible there. But JSW Steel has seven locations, and 25 locations of the group across India. "If we work from Vijayanagar, employees will have to travel less. It is less expensive as the colony is next door. So, not just from cost point of view, but also from employee satisfaction point, it may be better," Rao said.