

Published Date:	Tuesday 31st March, 2020	Publication:	The Economic Times [Bangalore]
Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	10
MAV/CCM:	151,040/47.2	Circulation:	50,760

Apollo-led Group of Cos to Help Govt with Covid Care

Biocon, Oyo, Zomato, SBI, HUL & others join hands; group identifies 80,000 hotel rooms that can be converted into isolation rooms

Our Bureau

Hyderabad: A group of companies led by Apollo Hospitals has come forward to bolster the government's efforts to contain the coronavirus outbreak, offering isolation rooms, medical supervision, food supplies and lab tests.

The group, which also includes Biocon, Oyo Hotels, Lemon Tree Hotels, Ginger Hotels, Zomato, SBI, HUL and Deutsche Bank, has identified about 80,000 hotel rooms across the country that can be converted into isolation rooms with medical supervision based on need. It is also pooling CSR funds to help patients with financial issues.

This was announced through video conference on Monday by Apollo Hospitals' joint managing director Sangita Reddy. Biocon chairman Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Oyo Hotels chief executive Ritesh Agarwal, HUL chairman Sanjiv Mehta, Lemon Tree president Vikramjit Singh, Zomato COO Gaurav Gupta, and Deutsche Bank India chief country officer Kaushik Shaparia were the other participants in the video conference meeting.

The group said they hope to break the chain of infections with the initiative, titled 'Project Stay I', which will extend help to over 10,000 patients a month. In the first phase, around 500 isolation rooms will take off in six Indian cities —Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi. The plan is to add 50 rooms every three da-

ys, taking in the count to about 5,000 rooms across India in phases.

SBI and HUL have pitched to offer 50% of category 1 rooms of Oyo free of cost to those Covid-19-affected persons who cannot afford it.

The initiative in the public-private-partnership mode is to ensure that people who don't need hospital beds are not using the scarce resource if they are not critically sick, said Reddy, adding that the objective is "to create isolation and quarantine facilities away from the main hospitals in cities across the country and reduce the burden on hospitals providing acute care".

Reddy said the model was envisaged to have a combination of self-paying and CSR-funded customers and the purpose of partnering with multiple facility brands was to ensure that all socio-economic segments of society have an equal opportunity to avail of these services.

Apollo Hospitals, which will assist the guests wishing to book a room in the network of isolation rooms through its website and helpline, will provide virtual medical rounds, a round-the-clock specialist, and medications and diagnostics prescribed. Apart from extending a comprehensive training to the Oyo staff to screen the Covid-19 guests, Apollo will track critical parameters of guests to shift them to a hospital if required.

Biocon's Shaw said her company will extend free Covid-19 tests as per the Indian Council of Medical Research under this partnership.