

Date: 31th July, 2021

Restile[®]
The Original **FULBODY** Tiles

BSE Limited
Corporate Relations Department,
27th Floor, Phiroze Jeejeebhoy Towers,
Dalal Street,
Fort,
Mumbai 400 001

Scrip Code: 515085
ISIN: INE298E01022

Sub: Submission of publication of advertisement regarding 35th Annual General Meeting in the newspapers (Post-despatch)

Ref: Intimation under Regulation 30 and all other applicable regulations, if any, of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, as amended from time to time.

Dear Sir/Mam,

Pursuant to Regulation 30 read with Schedule III Part A Para A of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, as amended from time to time. Please find enclosed herewith the copies of newspaper advertisement published in Financial Express, (English language newspaper having Nationwide Circulation) and Financial Express (Gujarati language newspaper) at Vadodara in compliance with Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, as amended from time to time and the Secretarial Standards of General Meetings issued by the Institute of Company Secretaries of India, intimating that 35th Annual General Meeting of the Company will be held on Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12.00 Noon (IST) through Video Conferencing ("VC") / Other Audio Visual Means ("OAVM").

The above information is also available on the website of the Company www.restile.com.

This is for your information and record.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

For, **RESTILE CERAMICS LIMITED**



VIREN DATHOD
Managing Director
(DIN: 03407158)
Encl.: A/a

RESTILE CERAMICS LIMITED

Regd. Office : 204, Sakar Complex, Opp. ABS Tower, Vaccine Crossing, Old Padra Road, Vadodara, Gujarat - 390015, India.
CIN : L26931GJ1986PLC102350

Branch Office : D.No.1-10-77, 5th Floor, Varun Towers, Opp. Hyderabad Public School, Begumpet, Hyderabad - 500 016.
E-mail : restile@accountsare.com, works@restile.com, Website : www.restile.com **Ph. No. 9998219763**

| Granamite | Mirrorstone | PearlRock | MarboGranit | Impacta | Gripmax

24 new Games-related Covid cases reported, IOC defends Olympics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Tokyo, July 29

THE TOKYO OLYMPICS organisers on Thursday announced 24 new Covid-19 cases, including three athletes, the highest one-day figures so far at the Games, even as the organisers insisted that the showpiece is not behind the record surge in the host city.

The city logged in an all-time high of 3,865 positive cases on Thursday. Three new deaths were recorded with 81 patients being described as "severe cases".

Reacting promptly, the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) spokesperson Mark Adams said the Games are not responsible for the surge in coronavirus infections in Tokyo, according to public broadcaster NHK.

The fresh additions took the total number of Games-related cases to 193.

Authorities are alarmed by the Japanese capital setting an all-time high and closing in on 4,000 cases, only a day after crossing the 3,000 mark for the first time.



The host city is in a state of emergency with Covid-19 infections at a record high.

Out of the 24 positive cases, six are Games-concerned personnel and 15 are contractors, besides the three athletes.

Tokyo had recorded 3,177 cases on Wednesday, while the Covid-19 infection numbers for the whole country was an all-time high of 9,583, the first time the figure has topped 9,000.

On Wednesday, 16 Olympics-related cases were reported but none were athletes and none were staying in the Games Village.

The total number of cases in the Games village currently stands at 23.

The organisers had said 38,484 people from abroad had entered Japan for the Games till Monday.

Japan has kept its cases and deaths lower than many other countries, but its seven-day average is increasing, according to the country's health ministry.

Meanwhile, the IOC spokesman Adams said there was nothing to suggest a link between the Games and the rising figures.

"As far as I'm aware there's not a single case of an infection spreading to the Tokyo population from the athletes or Olympic movement," he told reporters here.

"We have the most tested community probably anywhere...in the world, on top of that you have some of the toughest lockdown restrictions in the athlete's village," he added.

The organisers also insisted that the Games are not burdening the city's medical system.

RESURGING VIRUS

Delta's spread is testing even stringent 'Covid zero' defenses

Among the hardest hit is Australia, where delta is slipping through the mandatory hotel quarantine system far more easily than past strains

BLOOMBERG
July 29

THE RISE OF the highly-contagious delta variant is challenging even the most aggressive Covid-19 containment regimes, an ominous sign as economies look to open up and return to pre-pandemic life.

An outbreak that started at an airport in the eastern Chinese city of Nanjing is testing that country's zero-tolerance measures, which are some of the most sweeping and comprehensive in the world.

New infections are rising by the dozens and seeding subsequent clusters around China despite well-honed systems of mass testing and stringent quarantines. Beijing reported its first locally transmitted infection in six months on Thursday, linked to an outbreak in the southern province of Hunan among people who'd recently been to Nanjing.

The variant is scaling some



of the toughest virus defenses, with "Covid Zero" places — countries that had snuffed out the virus within their borders — still seeing outbreaks despite strict anti-virus measures.

Among the hardest hit is Australia, where delta is slipping through the mandatory hotel quarantine system far more easily than past strains and taking advantage of a low community vaccination rate.

A delta-fueled outbreak even forced Sydney, despite its efficient contact tracing and testing apparatus, into weeks of lockdown, with cases climbing to nearly 3,000 since mid-June.

In China, the first infections were among nine airport clean-

ers. The cluster quickly expanded to their close contacts, then to a handful of other locations, leading to nearly 200 confirmed Covid cases as of Thursday. It's one of China's biggest outbreaks since a wave concentrated in the country's northeast saw more than 2,000 infections last winter.

Officials have confirmed that the new outbreak is caused by the delta strain, which has been driving a resurgence in infections across the world.

The variant, which first emerged in India and is more transmissible than other strains, is exposing the limitations of the strategy of virus elimination, which is also fa-

vored by New Zealand and Singapore. Taiwan, which went months without any infections at all last year, recently backed away from Covid Zero, saying it was no longer targeting nil cases but transitioning toward a strategy of living with the virus.

Many of the people infected in China, including the Nanjing airport workers, had been fully vaccinated — and only four have developed severe cases of the disease — according to official data. The numbers signal that the immunity generated by China's vaccines while enough to ward off critical illness and death, is still insufficient to prevent the spread of the variants.

Nanjing is ramping up Covid measures as the outbreak added 18 more cases on Thursday. All residential compounds have been placed under lockdown, and the city is starting a third round of virus testing for its more than 9 million people. The airport has canceled most flights and its staff have been placed under restrictions.

The infected Beijing resident is likely connected to a cluster at an outdoor theater performance in Hunan, where the audience included infected people who had traveled to Nanjing. It's the first local infection recorded in tightly-guarded Beijing since the start of the year, when an outbreak in nearby Hebei province led to sporadic cases in the Chinese capital.

The cluster has placed every one of the roughly 3,000 theater-goers in Hunan at risk of infection, local authorities said, indicating that the number could grow.

The Chinese vaccines' efficacy in preventing symptomatic Covid has ranged between 50 to 80% in studies, lower than the more than 90% effectiveness for the potent mRNA vaccines developed by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech, as well as Moderna.

Countries including Thailand and United Arab Emirates that initially relied on Chinese vaccines have decided to offer booster shots to some fully-vaccinated people to provide better protection against the delta strain. Globally, the variant has already forced the US to institute new mask mandates, delayed a reopening in Singapore and put other Australian cities under lockdown.

Despite its largely closed borders, China has also seen more frequent virus flareups since the beginning of this year as variants from other hotspots around the world get in, often through workers in high-risk areas such as airports and cargo centers.

The outbreaks, while minimal compared to clusters in parts of the US and Southeast Asia, are putting pressure on officials to rethink the vaccination campaign to possibly include booster shots.

SICOM LIMITED
Registered Office: Solitaire Corporate Park, Building No. 4, Chakola, Andheri (East) Mumbai - 400 093, Tel No:- (022) 66572700, Website: www.sicomindia.com

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR PURCHASE OF ASSET IN POSSESSION
SICOM Limited, a Public Financial Institution, invites Expression of Interest (EOI) latest by August 20, 2021 alongwith EMD @ 1% of offer price from interested parties for purchase of immovable property being Residential Flat measuring 616.03 sq. mtrs. (6.631 sq. ft.), carpet area, excluding the fire escape passage, refuge (terrace)/moat/ flower beds/ service areas measuring 615.16 sq. mtrs. (6.621 sq. ft.) forming part of the common areas on the 52nd (South East) level (37th Floor) together with garage measuring 74.32 sq. mtrs. (800 sq. ft.) built up and godown measuring 18.58 sq. mtrs. (200 sq. ft.) of the building known as "Palais Royale" bearing Plot Nos. 5B and 6, Dadar Survey Nos. 288 (Part), 289 (Part), 1/1540 (Part), 2/1540 (Part) and 3/1540 (Part) of Lower Panel Division at Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Worli, Mumbai-400 018.

The details of assets and the terms and conditions of sale are available on our website www.sicomindia.com. The party with the highest offer shall get the right of first refusal under Swiss Challenge at the auction of the assets to be conducted subsequently.

Place - Mumbai
Date - July 30, 2021
Dr. Nitin Jawale, IAS (Managing Director)

RESTILE CERAMICS LIMITED
(CIN:L26931GJ1986PLC102350)

Registered Office: 204, Sakar Complex, Opp. ABS Tower, Vaccine Crossing, Old Padra Road, Vadodara-390015, Gujarat Phone: 9998219763
Website: www.restile.com E-mail: restile@accountsare.com

NOTICE OF THE 35TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, E-VOTING AND BOOK CLOSURE INFORMATION

Notice is hereby given that:

1. The Thirty-Five (35th) Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Shareholders of Restile Ceramics Limited (the Company) will be held on **Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:00 Noon (IST)** through Video Conferencing (VC) / Other Audio-Visual Means (OAVM) in compliance with General Circular No. 14/2020 dated April 08, 2020, 17/2020 dated April 13, 2020, 20/2020 dated May 5, 2020 and 02/2021 dated 13.01.2021 and other applicable circulars, if any, issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) and Circular Nos. SEBI/HO/CFD/CMD1/CIR/P/2020/79 dated 12th May, 2020 and SEBI/HO/CFD/CMD2/CIR/P/2021/11 dated 15th January, 2021 issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) (herein after collectively referred to as "Circulars") vide which, companies are allowed to hold AGMs through VC/OAVM, without the physical presence of members at a common venue. Hence, the 35th AGM of the Company shall be held through VC/OAVM to transact the business as set forth in the Notice of the 35th AGM dated June 22, 2021. Members participating through the VC/OAVM facility shall be reckoned for the purpose of quorum under Section 103 of the Companies Act, 2013.

2. In compliance with the Circulars, electronic copies of the Notice of the 35th AGM and Annual Report 2020-21 have been sent to all the members whose email IDs are registered with the Company/Depository Participant(s). These documents are also available on the website of the Company at www.restile.com, Stock Exchange websites i.e. BSE Limited (BSE) at www.bseindia.com and also on the CDLS's website at https://www.evotingindia.com, an agency appointed for conducting Remote e-voting, e-voting during the process of AGM and VC. The dispatch of Notice of the AGM through emails has been completed on 29th July, 2021.

3. Notice is also hereby given that pursuant to the provisions of Section 91 (1) of the Companies Act, 2013 and Regulation 42 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the Register of Members and Share Transfer Books of the Company shall remain closed Thursday, August 19, 2021 to Wednesday, August 25, 2021, (both days inclusive) for the purpose of 35th AGM.

4. In terms of Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with amended Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Amendment Rules, 2015 and Regulation 44 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, as amended from time to time, the following information is available to the Shareholders of the Company:

Members holding equity shares either in physical form or dematerialized form, as on the cut-off-date (Record date) **Wednesday, August 18, 2021**, may cast their vote electronically on the business as set forth in the Notice of the 35th AGM dated June 22, 2021 through the electronic voting system of Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL).

All the members are hereby informed that -

i. The business as set forth in the Notice of the 35th AGM dated 22nd June, 2021, shall be transacted through remote e-voting and e-voting during the AGM;
ii. The remote e-voting shall commence on Saturday, August 21, 2021 (10.00 Hrs. IST);
iii. The remote e-voting shall close on Tuesday, August 24, 2021 (17.00 Hrs. IST);
iv. The cut-off-date (Record date) for determining the eligibility to vote by remote e-voting and/or e-voting system at the AGM shall be Wednesday, August 18, 2021;
v. Any person, who acquires equity shares of the Company and becomes a member of the Company after dispatch of the Notice of the AGM and holding equity shares as on the cut-off-date (Record date) i.e. Wednesday, August 18, 2021, may obtain/generate the login ID and password as per the instructions given in the Note no. vii of the Notice of the 35th AGM dated June 22, 2021.

vi. Members may note that:

a) The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by CDSL beyond 17:00 Hrs. IST on Tuesday, August 24, 2021 and once the vote on a resolution is cast and confirmed by the member, the member shall not be allowed to change it subsequently;
b) The facility for e-voting will also be made available during the AGM and those members present in the AGM through VC facility, who have not cast their vote on the resolutions through remote e-voting and are otherwise not barred from doing so, shall be eligible to vote through the e-voting system at the AGM;
c) The members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the AGM may also attend the AGM but shall not be entitled to cast their vote again;
d) A person whose name is recorded in the Register of Members or in the Register of beneficial owners maintained by the depositories as on the cut-off-date (Record date) i.e. Wednesday, August 18, 2021 only shall be entitled to avail the facility of remote e-voting and/or e-voting at the AGM and for participation at the AGM.

vii. The manner of voting remotely, for members holding shares in dematerialized mode/ physical mode and for members who have not registered their email addresses, is provided in the Notice of the AGM. The details will also be made available on the website of the Company. Members are requested to visit www.restile.com to obtain such details.

viii. Members holding shares in dematerialized mode, who have not registered/ updated their email addresses/ Bank Account Details with their Depository Participants, are requested to register/ update the same with the Depository Participants with whom they maintain their demat accounts and Members holding shares in physical mode, who have not registered/ updated their email addresses/ Bank Account Details with the Company, are requested to register/ update the same with the Company by sending an e-mail at restile@accountsare.com by quoting their Folio Number and attaching a self-attested copy of PAN in order to facilitate the Company to serve the documents through the electronic mode and to receive copies of the Annual Report 2020-21 along with the Notice of the 35th AGM, instructions for remote e-voting and e-voting during AGM and instructions for participation in the AGM through VC.

ix. The Company has appointed Mr. Niraj R. Trivedi, Practicing Company Secretary, Vadodara, Gujarat as the Scrutinizer to scrutinize the e-voting process in a fair and transparent manner.

x. In case of any query, members may refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and e-voting user manual available at www.evotingindia.com under help section and for any grievances connected with e-voting facility, may contact helpdesk (022-23058738, 23058542) at CDSL, A Wing, 25th Floor, Marathon Futrex, Mafatlal Mill Compound, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel (E), Mumbai - 400013, or send an email to helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com. The members who require technical assistance to access and participate in the meeting through VC may contact the above help line numbers.

By Order of the Board
For Restile Ceramics Limited
Ravi Kiran Sukumar
Company secretary

Place: Vadodara
Date: 28.07.2021

FORM A - PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
(Under Regulation 6 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016)
FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CREDITORS OF (DESIKARAN CARTONS PRIVATE LIMITED)

RELEVANT PARTICULARS

1. Name of corporate debtor	DeSikaran Cartons Private Limited
2. Date of incorporation of corporate debtor	21st October 2002
3. Authority under which corporate debtor is incorporated / registered	Company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 registered with Registrar of Companies, Maharashtra (Mumbai)
4. Corporate Identity No. / Limited Liability Identification No. of corporate debtor	U74999MH2002PTC137629
5. Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor	Kulkarni House, 2nd Floor, Ghantala Road, Naupada, Thane-400602, Maharashtra, India.
6. Insolvency commencement date in respect of corporate debtor	Hon'ble NCLT Mumbai Bench Order Pronounced on - 23rd July 2021. Copy of Order Uploaded on the Website:- 28th August, 2021
7. Estimated date of closure of insolvency resolution process	19th January, 2022
8. Name and registration number of the insolvency professional acting as interim resolution professional	Mr. Vivek Muralidhar Dabhadre (IBBI Registration No. IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P00306/2017-2018/10570)
9. Address and e-mail of the interim resolution professional, as registered with the Board	B-13, Trupti Garden, Near Harshal Palace, Wadgaon BK II, Pune-411051 Email: cavivekdabhadre@gmail.com
10. Address and e-mail to be used for correspondence with the interim resolution professional	B-13, Trupti Garden, Near Harshal Palace, Wadgaon BK II, Pune-411051 Email: desikarancrp@gmail.com
11. Last date for submission of claims	11th August, 2021
12. Classes of creditors, if any, under clause (b) of sub-section (6A) of section 21, ascertained by the interim resolution professional	Not Applicable
13. Names of Insolvency Professionals identified to act as Authorised Representative of creditors in a class (Three names for each class)	Not Applicable
14. (a) Relevant Forms and (b) Details of authorized representatives are available at:	Web link: https://ibbi.gov.in/home/downloads

Notice is hereby given that the National Company Law Tribunal has ordered the commencement of a corporate insolvency resolution process of the **DeSikaran Cartons Private Limited** on **23rd July, 2021**.

The creditors of **DeSikaran Cartons Private Limited**, are hereby called upon to submit their claims with proof on or before **11th August, 2021** to the interim resolution professional at the address mentioned against entry No. 10.

The financial creditors shall submit their claims with proof by electronic means only. All other creditors may submit the claims with proof in person, by post or by electronic means.

A financial creditor belonging to a class, as listed against the entry No. 12, shall indicate its choice of authorized representative from among the three insolvency professionals listed against entry No. 13 to act as authorised representative of the class (specify class) in Form CA. (Not Applicable)

Submission of false or misleading proofs of claim shall attract penalties.

Sd/ **Mr. Vivek Muralidhar Dabhadre**
Interim Resolution Professional
IBBI Registration No. IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P00306/2017-18/10570
Date: 30th July 2021 Place: Pune

FORM A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
(Under Regulation 6 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016)
FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CREDITORS OF BIL INFRA TECH LIMITED

RELEVANT PARTICULARS

1. Name of corporate debtor	BIL InfraTech Limited
2. Date of incorporation of corporate debtor	29/07/2010
3. Authority under which corporate debtor is incorporated / registered	Registrar of Companies, Kolkata
4. Corporate Identity No. / Limited Liability Identification No. of corporate debtor	U45400WB2010PLC151907
5. Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor	37/2, Chinrapark, New Town, Rajarhat Main Road, PO - Hattara, Kolkata Parganas North, West Bengal- 700157
6. Insolvency commencement date in respect of corporate debtor	28-07-2021
7. Estimated date of closure of insolvency resolution process	23.01.2022
8. Name and registration number of the insolvency professional acting as interim resolution professional	Subodh Kumar Agrawal Regn No. - IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P00087/2017-18/10183
9. Address and e-mail of the interim resolution professional, as registered with the Board	Address: 1, Ganesh Chandra Avenue, Room No-301, 3rd Floor, Kolkata - 700 013 Email id: subodhika@gmail.com
10. Address and e-mail to be used for correspondence with the interim resolution professional	Address: 1, Ganesh Chandra Avenue, Room No-301, 3rd Floor, Kolkata - 700 013 Email id: crp.bilinfra@gmail.com
11. Last date for submission of claims	11-08-2021
12. Classes of creditors, if any, under clause (b) of sub-section (6A) of section 21, ascertained by the interim resolution professional	NA
13. Names of Insolvency Professionals identified to act as Authorised Representative of creditors in a class (Three names for each class)	NA
14. (a) Relevant Forms and (b) Details of authorized representatives are available at:	(a) https://ibbi.gov.in/home/downloads (b) NA

Notice is hereby given that the National Company Law Tribunal (Kolkata Bench) has ordered the commencement of a corporate insolvency resolution process of the **M/s BIL InfraTech Limited** on **28.07.2021**.

The creditors of "M/s BIL InfraTech Limited", are hereby called upon to submit their claims with proof on or before **11-08-2021** to the interim resolution professional at the address mentioned against entry No. 10.

The financial creditors shall submit their claims with proof by electronic means only. All other creditors may submit the claims with proof in person, by post or by electronic means.

A financial creditor belonging to a class, as listed against the entry No. 12, shall indicate its choice of authorized representative from among the three insolvency professionals listed against entry No. 13 to act as authorized representative of the class (specify class) in Form CA

Submission of false or misleading proofs of claim shall attract penalties.

Sd/ **Subodh Kumar Agrawal**
Interim Resolution Professional
M/s BIL InfraTech Limited
IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P00087/2017-18/10183

Date: 29-07-2021
Place: Kolkata

Big Tech starts requiring vaccines; Twitter closes re-opened US offices

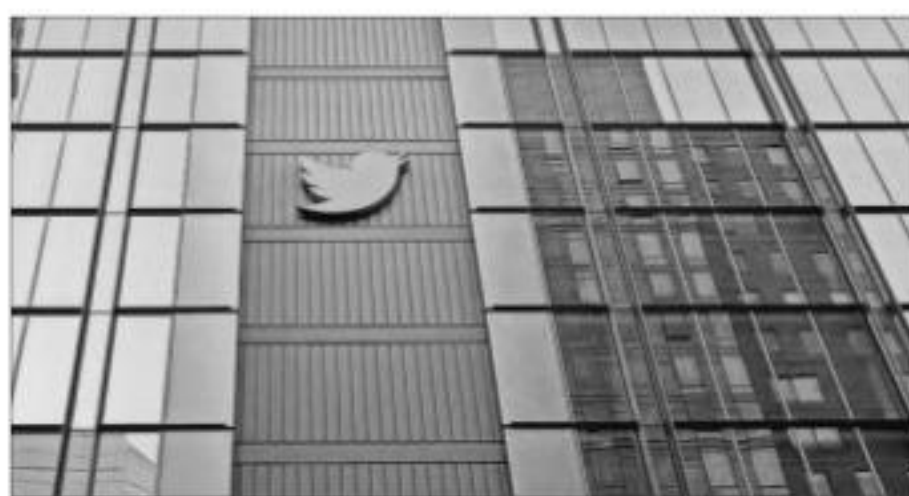
REUTERS
July 29

TWITTER IS SHUTTING its re-opened offices in United States, while other big tech companies are making vaccination mandatory for on-campus employees, as the highly infectious Delta Covid-19 variant drives a resurgence in cases.

Alphabet's Google and Facebook said on Wednesday all US employees must get vaccinated to step into offices. Google is also planning to expand its vaccination drive to other regions in the coming months.

Twitter, which on Wednesday also passed future office reopenings, had started allowing employees back to its campuses in San Francisco and New York at 50% capacity about a fortnight ago after more than 16 months.

US coronavirus cases have



been rising due to the Delta variant, which emerged in India but has quickly spread and now accounts for more than 80% of US coronavirus cases.

Health authorities on Tuesday said Americans fully vaccinated against Covid-19 should go back to wearing masks in indoor public places in regions where the coronavirus is spreading rapidly.

San Francisco-based ride-hailing company Lyft, which

had already made vaccinations mandatory for employees returning to the office, postponed its reopening to February from September.

"We anticipate the Covid situation will remain fluid for the upcoming months, making it difficult for us to land a clear return date without a possibility of moving it again," Lyft CEO Logan Green said in a memo to staff.

According to a Deadline re-

port, streaming giant Netflix has also implemented a policy mandating vaccinations for the cast and crew on all its US productions.

Apple plans to restore its mask requirement policy at most of its US retail stores, both for customers and staff, even if they are vaccinated, Bloomberg News reported.

Apple and Netflix did not immediately respond to requests for comments.

Many tech companies including Microsoft and Uber have said they expect employees to return to offices, months after pandemic-induced lockdowns forced them to shift to working from home.

Google also said on Wednesday it would extend its work-from-home policy through Oct. 18 due to a recent rise in cases caused by the Delta variant across different regions.

From Facebook to Twitter, Big Tech sees social commerce driving sales growth

SHEILA DANG & NIVEDITA BALU
July 29

LED BY FACEBOOK, social media platforms from Alphabet's YouTube to Snap and Twitter are investing heavily in shopping features to drive revenue growth, a major theme that emerged during second-quarter results over the past week.

The companies are vying for a piece of the so-called social commerce industry, which relies on users' ability to discover and buy products through social media apps and is expected to balloon to \$50 billion from \$36 billion in annual sales by 2023 in the United States according to research firm eMarketer.

The success of social commerce stems in part from product targeting based on user interests, with sales generating more data that can be used for future advertising and merchandise placements. Facebook, widely considered the leader in social commerce, and Google helped retailers bring in sales in the last quarter, with e-commerce player Shopify saying the growth rate of products sold through the two tech companies' platforms was "several times that" of websites run by the merchants themselves.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said that enabling commerce and making it easier for businesses to commu-



nicate with customers through its Messenger and WhatsApp apps was "the right long-term bet."

Retailers are increasingly hopping on to the trend as Covid-19 restrictions weigh on brick-and-mortar sales. Brands ranging from luxury fashion house Burberry to fast fashion giant H&M have signed up celebrities and influencers to get millions of their followers to make purchases off ephemeral stories or posts by asking them to "swipe up to purchase."

While the business is small for now, the social media giants are eyeing the data generated from users' shopping and browsing habits for targeted advertising. The scramble for user data has become even more crucial as recent privacy changes from Apple

limit tech companies' ability to track iPhone users and serve personalised advertising, ad experts have said.

Facebook launched Shops in May 2020 during the height of the pandemic, luring brands with an easy way to sell items directly through Facebook and Instagram and consumers with a curated and personalized way to discover trendy clothes or home goods.

Facebook was the top social commerce platform according to a survey conducted by eMarketer in June 2020, with 18% of respondents saying they had purchased a product via Facebook. That compared with 11% for Facebook-owned Instagram and 3% for Pinterest.

Even as restrictions lift, analysts say the demand for shopping online is unlikely

to retreat.

"People have gotten accustomed to buying online," said Edward Jones analyst Dave Heger. "I don't think that they're going to go completely back to the level they were at before in terms of purchasing at brick and mortar stores."

Snap is investing in augmented reality technology designed to help users virtually try on items like watches, jewelry and other apparel to cut down on returns, a major problem faced by online retailers.

Snapchat users can take a photo of a friend's outfit with the app and find similar looks or product recommendations, Snap chief executive Evan Spiegel said last week during the company's earnings conference call.

"The holy grail of advertising is to actually sell merchandise," said Rich Greenfield, a partner at LightSpeed Partners, in a note on Snap last week.

"While these initiatives are still in the early stages, we believe an increasing number of brands want to be associated with where commerce is headed."

Popular short-form video app TikTok is testing live-streamed shopping with select brands in the UK, allowing viewers purchase clothes as an influencer models the item in real time during a live video. —REUTERS

