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## Coronavirus impact: Centre pushes ventilator firms to make 120k units

Manufacturers Navigate Component bottle-necks, tie-up with car-makers to meet targets

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Pavan Lall

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Local ventilator manufacturers are grappling with component bottlenecks even as the government stepped up demand for the devices, which are estimated to lower the mortality rate of those infected by [coronavirus](#) by about 85-90 per cent.

Historically, the market for ventilators has been small, with a size of some 7,000 units, say those who work in the medical devices business. However, because of [coronavirus](#) disease (Covid-19), the government and associated joint task force committees have in recent times told manufacturers that they will need to deliver between 100,000 and 120,000 ventilators as soon as possible.

This comes on the back of the central government reaching out to automobile manufacturers asking them to use their facilities to produce ventilators. Separately, the health ministry has asked the Bharat Electronics (BEL), a public sector undertaking, to manufacture 30,000 ventilators in the next two months in collaboration with local manufacturers.

Following the government's clarion call, many local ventilator makers have sought to collaborate with automobile manufacturers to ramp-up production. One such firm is Mysuru-based Skanray Technologies.

Skanray's output on average has been around 2,000-2,500 units a year. However, to meet the surge in demand it is looking to make at least 5,000 units in the next month and around 30,000 in the weeks following that. For this, said Vishwaprasad Alva, managing

director of Skanray, it has tied up with SUV-maker Mahindra & Mahindra. At present, around 30 engineers at M&M are in discussions with Skanray officials to see how they can align competencies, he added.

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Alva said, however, that his company was grappling with a shortfall of components, given that most original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) say that flow sensors, pressure sensors, digital screens and electrical components are imported from Germany, the USA and Japan, and are in short supply.

"We are not aggregators and if we don't get parts from other suppliers there is a way to work around it, which is why we are talking with automakers to see if their sensors can be reconfigured for ventilator usage," Alva said.

At the moment, most countries, including India, have banned exports of ventilators. Availability of ventilators gives patients a 90 per cent chance of survival, Alva said.

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According to Chirag Gala, managing director of Avi Healthcare, a Mumbai-based manufacturer of neonatal ventilators, the Center has been quick to support the sector offering Rs 40 crore worth of support and facility space in Andhra Pradesh.

"They say they need 120,000 ventilators fast," said Gala, who was part of WhatsApp chat groups where government officials, including Union Minister Piyush Goyal were pushing for higher output. He added that he had also reached out to Ashok Leyland to explore potential collaboration.

Avi Healthcare has a capacity of about 1,500 units a year, but ventilators made for infants have an inflation capacity that is around ten times smaller than for an adult and would need re-engineering.


A ventilator can range in price from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh, and advanced ones, called ICU ventilators, can go up to Rs 18 lakh. "Seventy per cent of Covid-19 patients who have fluid in the lungs but have healthy lungs can be treated by a basic machine, whereas the other 30 per cent would need ICU technology," said Vineet Acharya, director of Lifeline Biz.

According to estimates, there are 40,000-50,000 ventilators in India at present. Acharya said while getting the required components back into supply was one issue, the bigger challenge was to move fast and ramp-up production to meet potential demand.

### Read our full coverage on Coronavirus

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