

## Unorganised workers have been hit hard, need direct payments, India Inc tells PM

Modi calls for trust; Kotak suggested one-off transfer of Rs 5,000 to those over 25, Rs 10,000 to those above 65

**PVAIDYANATHAN IYER**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 23

AT LEAST six top corporate leaders are said to have recommended to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the government should make payments to unorganised sector workers since they bear the brunt of the severe lockdown measures to arrest the spread of COVID-19 disease.

N Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons, who spoke first after the Prime Minister's 15-minute opening remarks, called for a relaxation of the fiscal deficit target by at least one percentage point of GDP. He strongly advocated DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) of funds to the



PM interacts with media heads through video conferencing on COVID-19, in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

lowest rung of the society. Uday Kotak, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, Kotak Mahindra Bank, had a more specific suggestion. Given the exceptional circumstances, the government must, as a one-off

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## Migrant workers' rush chokes transit points in the East: Where do we go, what do we do now?

**ABHISHEK ANGAD, SANTOSH SINGH & RAVIK BHATTACHARYA**  
RANCHI, PATNA, KOLKATA, MARCH 23

FROM JHARKHAND to Bihar and West Bengal, governments scrambled Monday to cope with the return of thousands of migrant workers from cities and states as far away as Kerala amid an unprecedented 10-day shutdown of rail and inter-state bus services to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

Officials said thousands of people have returned over the last 10 days, mainly from Mumbai, Pune, Delhi and Chennai, and cities in Punjab and Kerala.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



An official in Ranchi said about 3,000-4,000 people reached the city on an average every day over the past week on

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**30 STATES/UTs, 548 DISTRICTS** are now enforcing the shutdown

**NO RELAXATION IN PUNJAB** till morning of March 25

**HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE** only for healthcare workers: ICMR

# Lockdown spreads, state by state



As public transport services start shutting down, people scramble to get onto a long-distance bus in Kolkata on Monday. PTI

## Curfew across Punjab, Maharashtra; internal flights too suspended

**ABANTIKA GHOSH & PRAVAN MUKUL**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 23

THE GOVERNMENT Monday extended the shutdown to contain the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) to domestic commercial aviation, stopping all flights from Tuesday midnight till March 31. Thirty states and Union territories have now announced a complete lockdown in 548 districts, while in 58 districts of three states, the curbs are partial.

Monday's orders follow the cessation of bus, Metro and train services across the country. The state/UTs with complete lock-

**CORONA COUNT**

**4689** CASES DEATHS

**35 RECOVERED**

**20,707 samples from 19,817 individuals tested**

down include Delhi, Chandigarh, West Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Assam, Uttarakhand etc.

The total number of positive cases has now touched 468

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## Delhi borders sealed: IDs for essential staff, curfew passes for rest

**MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 23

AFTER STRUGGLING to implement CrPC Section 144 which prohibits assembly of four or more persons in an area, the Delhi Police Monday tightened curbs in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, sealing border pickets with immediate effect and making curfew passes mandatory to enter and exit the city.

This was done after police observed that execution of prohibitory orders in the capital was "not up to the mark".

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## No community spread yet, all actions to stop it: NITI panel head

**HARIKISHAN SHARMA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 23

NITI AAYOG member Dr V K Paul, heading a panel to coordinate coronavirus efforts, said Monday that India has not started seeing community transmission as yet, and the strategy as of now was to guard against it and intensify containment measures.

In an interview to *The Indian Express*, a day after the country observed Janata Curfew, Paul said, "Today, you can say, as of now we are preparing for Stage 3 and intensification of containment to the best possible extent."



**THE EXPRESS INTERVIEW**  
"TOOK NUANCED STEPS... CHANGED WITH SITUATION"  
V K PAUL  
NITI AAYOG MEMBER

Asked if India was in Stage 3, or community transmission, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Shutdowns weigh heavy on sentiment, Sensex tanks 13% in biggest daily crash

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

THE STOCK market selloff intensified Monday with the BSE Sensex plummeting 3,935 points, or 13.15 per cent, to 25,981.24 — the biggest daily crash in the history of the capital

market — in the wake of the lockdown announced by several states following a spurt in the number of coronavirus cases. The NSE Nifty nosedived 1,135.20 points or 12.98 per cent to settle at a four-year low of 7,610.25 and close to Rs 13.9 lakh crore of investors' wealth was wiped out in the selloff during the day.

## Cap on fuel excise duty up Rs 8 to mobilise resources

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 23

OPENING A window to increase excise duty on fuel, the government has raised the cap on special additional excise duty on petrol and diesel to Rs 18 and Rs 12 per litre, respectively, as per amendments in the Finance Bill passed in Parliament Monday.

Last year's Finance Act had put the cap at Rs 10 per litre for petrol and Rs 4 per litre for diesel. The change in the cap will enable the government to raise duties on petrol and diesel by another Rs 8 per litre each.

Every rupee hike in excise duty is expected to yield roughly Rs 13,000-14,000 crore annually. The slump in global crude oil

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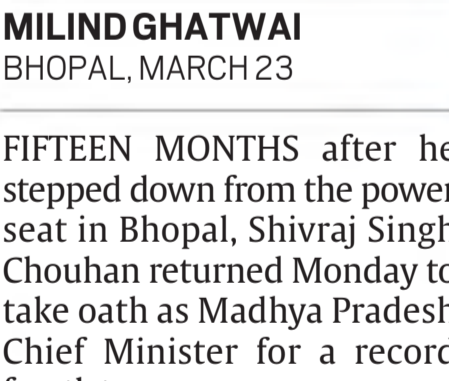
## Chouhan back in MP, takes charge as CM to start his fourth innings

**MILIND GHATWAI**  
BHOPAL, MARCH 23

FIFTEEN MONTHS after he stepped down from the power seat in Bhopal, Shivraj Singh Chouhan returned Monday to take oath as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister for a record fourth term.

Governor Lalji Tandon administered the oath of office Monday night, hours after Chouhan was elected BJP Legislature Party leader.

Chouhan's first crucial test will be the Assembly bypolls to 24 seats — 22 held by Congress rebels who resigned and two which fell vacant following the death of the MLAs (one each from THE Congress, BJP). The BJP has 107 members in the 230-member Assembly, so the bypoll results can decide whether its



With BJP leader Gopal Bhargava in Bhopal. PTI

government stays or falls.

All eyes will also be on the Cabinet selection — whether Chouhan accommodates the Congress rebels, or chooses to wait till the bypolls are held.

The Congress, which won 114 seats in the Assembly polls last December and formed the government with the support of four



With BJP leader Gopal Bhargava in Bhopal. PTI

government with the support of four

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## Bengaluru to Mumbai: States prepare, earmark hospitals exclusively for coronavirus patients

**PAGE 1 ANCHOR**

**JOHNSON TA & TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA**  
BENGALURU, MUMBAI, MARCH 23

WITH EXPERTS foreseeing a rise in COVID-19 cases over the next few days, at least two medical facilities, the Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru and the

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation-run Seven Hills Hospital in Mumbai, have been set aside exclusively for COVID-19 patients.

While the 120-year-old Victoria Hospital, run by the Karnataka government, has been designated as the first exclusive hospital for COVID-19 patients in the state, in Mumbai, the BMC has tied up with H N Reliance Hospital, owned by Reliance Industries Ltd, to set aside a 100-bed isolation ward in Seven Hills Hospital. The rest



States expect cases to rise, brace for challenge. Express

of the hospital is already being used to quarantine suspected cases of COVID-19.

On the COVID-19 ward at Seven Hills Hospital, a statement from H N Reliance hospital said, "This first-of-its-kind-in-India centre is fully funded by Reliance Foundation and includes a negative pressure room that helps in preventing cross-contamination and helps control infection."

The beds have been equipped with bio-medical equipment such as ventilators,

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