

1. Centre's thinking: More flexibility to states on easing coronavirus lockdown curbs

Source: Financial Express ([Link](#))

Even as several states have already announced extension of restrictions for two more weeks, the Centre is learnt to be looking at a lockdown model which allows the states to decide if there is room for relaxation in some areas. However, with 354 districts — almost half the total districts — reporting novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases, the task of identifying the “very safe” areas will be difficult. Also, the number of cases is still rising. In the highest single-day spike so far, 918 cases and 31 deaths were reported on 12 March. The total has now gone up to 8,447 cases, of which 273 died and 764 recovered. At Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#)'s video conference with chief ministers on 11 March, several states had favoured a graded approach, pushing for resumption of some economic activities in regions with no COVID-19 cases. Some like Bhupesh Baghel (Chhattisgarh), Pinarayi Vijayan (Kerala) and YSR Jagan Mohan Reddy (Andhra Pradesh) sought the freedom and authority to decide and allow economic activities, be it farming or industry.

2. World Bank sees India's GDP growth at 1.5-2.8%, lowest since 1991 crisis

Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

The World Bank has scaled down India's gross domestic growth (GDP) growth projection to 1.5-2.8 per cent for the current fiscal year, which would be the lowest economic expansion since the balance of payments crisis of 1991-92, as Covid-19 is dragging down activities in the already slowing economy. It had earlier projected the growth to be 6.1 per cent for 2020-21. In its South Asia Economic Update, the Bank warned that migrant workers and conditions in slum areas would make it challenging to adopt social distancing norms to arrest the spread of deadly coronavirus. The publication, brought before the spring meetings of the IMF and the World Bank later this month, predicted industrial gross value added to be flat in 2020-21, against 1.9 per cent expected for 2019-20. Services were pegged to grow by 4.1 per cent in the current fiscal year, against 6.9 per cent a year ago, and agriculture by 2.7 per cent against 3.5 per cent.

3. Lockdown 2.0: Hotspots in focus as India explores decentralized exit strategy

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

As the nationwide lockdown nears an end, hotspots or infection clusters across India have risen three-fold to 150 in the past week, complicating the government's efforts to contain the spread

of covid-19. To make matters worse, nearly 100 districts that have such hotspots are also major manufacturing hubs of the country—posing difficulties in reopening factories quickly. The surge in infection clusters comes amid India exploring a decentralized strategy to exit the lockdown that may involve dividing the nation into green, orange and red zones. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier made it clear that the lockdown cannot be lifted across the country in one go.

4. SEZs seek govt permission to sell goods in India at discounted import duty

Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

Export Promotion Council for EOUs & SEZs (EPCES) on 12 March urged the commerce ministry to allow units to sell goods at discounted import duty rates in the domestic market as the national lockdown and cancellation of orders may impact jobs. SEZs are treated as a foreign territory in terms of customs laws. They are developed as exclusive export zones. Selling of goods by these manufacturing units in the domestic market or outside these zones is treated as imports and therefore the units have to pay full import duty. "In this crisis time, we have asked the commerce ministry that SEZs may be permitted for sale of their product in the domestic market on the discounted rate of basic customs duty, at least for one year. This will help them to utilise their capacity and required to save their employees and meet break-even," Export Promotion Council for SEZs and EOUs Vice-Chairman Bhuvnesh Seth said.

5. Coronavirus lockdown: Govt may start economic activity in 'green zones'

Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

Even as the country awaited a formal announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to extend the nationwide lockdown, Telangana became the fourth state to extend it till April 30. The current phase of lockdown ends on 14 April. The health ministry data revealed that coronavirus (Covid-19) has claimed 273 lives in India as the number of cases climbed to 8,447 by 12 March. There were over 900 new cases, it said. According to finance ministry sources, the PM might address the nation once the Centre shapes the contours of the plan to revive economic activity in a phased manner. The Centre is keen to restart economic activity in 'green zones', or areas with a low incidence of Covid-19 cases.

6. Private labels, local brands find space in kirana stores as logistics handicap bigger FMCG firms

Source: Financial Express ([Link](#))

Private labels and local brands have emerged as a beneficiary of the ongoing lockdown as they have now started to occupy a space in households which was earlier ruled by bigger FMCG

companies. As logistics and production becomes an issue, regional brands and private labels are now more readily available at kirana stores and have filled the void created by bigger firms, The Indian Express reported. The lockdown has led to about 90% of India's trucks getting stranded on roads and the issues relating to workforce also persists. This has collectively hampered both manufacturing and transporting of essential goods.

7. Seven major consultancies join hands with Invest India for economic revival post Covid-19

Source: The Hindu, Business Line ([Link](#))

Seven of the top global consultancy firms — Bain & Co, EY, PwC, BCG, KPMG, Primus Partners and Mirae Asset Management — have joined hands with Invest India to chalk out an economic revival strategy for India after the pandemic comes to an end. Invest India is a not-for-profit joint venture of Indian chambers of commerce (FICCI, CII and Nasscom holding 51 per cent) with the Ministry of Commerce (49 per cent), meant to catalyse investments into India. The group that calls itself Business Reconstruction Team wants to “create a strategy and ‘ready to implement’ plan of action for India’s economic revival by analysing quantitative and qualitative metrics across States, districts and sectors,” according to documents of Invest India.

8. As the virus rages, Air India scrambles to ‘preserve’ its fleet

Source: The Hindu, Business Line ([Link](#))

As many airlines are either shutting operations or operating with truncated fleets, the grounded aircraft have to be taken care of. Looking after aircraft is not easy. Referred to as ‘aircraft preservation’, it involves a number of steps. Firstly, the manufacturer of the aircraft lays down a storage plan and airlines draw up air maintenance plans based on their aircraft. This is done to ensure that the aircraft is kept in an air-worthy condition to be able to fly again when the ban is lifted. One of the most significant aspects that needs to be taken care of is the number of openings on an aircraft where small insects, birds or debris may get stuck. A senior Air India Engineering Executive told *BusinessLine* that one of the openings that needs to be covered is in the landing gear.

9. Coronavirus Lockdown 2.0: Focus on both life, livelihood

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

India’s urban centres will see an extension of the lockdown at least until the end of the month but the government also wants to ensure that the engines of the economy start turning—by making exemptions for agriculture, factories and the transport of goods. The next phase of the lockdown starting April 15 is expected to ensure that harvests and procurement of produce take

place without any hindrance, said people with knowledge of the matter. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is said to have suggested a “lock-in” for factories with workers staying onsite and maintaining social distancing. The Centre is contemplating measures to bring migrant workers from camps to their factories, possibly by running special buses or trains.