

Govt plans to resume some manufacturing amid lockdown Sources

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India is planning to restart some manufacturing after April 15, to help offset the economic damage of a nationwide corona virus lockdown, two government sources said, even as it weighs extending the lockdown.

The 21-day lockdown of India's more than 1.3 billion people is due to end on Tuesday, but the government is widely expected to extend it until the end of the month.

One of the sources said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had directed some ministries to come up with plans to open up some crucial industries as the livelihoods of the poor were being hit.

The source said that the government was considering allowing the resumption of some operations, under guidelines that were being drawn up.

The sources, who spoke to Reuters on Sunday, asked not to be identified as the plans are still under discussion.

Reasonable safeguards

Separately, in a letter seen by Reuters, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recommended restarting some manufacturing in the autos, textiles, defence, electronics and other sectors.

The ministry said in the letter, addressed to the Home Ministry, that this could be achieved via reduced shifts with lower staff numbers to ensure social distancing.

"We believe some industries could be allowed with reasonable safeguards as long as social distancing norms are maintained," the second official, from the industries department, said.

The Home Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office are likely to take a final call on the recommendations this week, the sources said.

The sources also said that other ministries would soon submit plans on allowing partial resumptions in other sectors.

India's economy, which was already growing at its slowest pace in six years before the onset of the corona virus, is set to take a severe hit amid the lockdown, say economists, who warn that unemployment could rise to record levels.