

Transfer Rs 15,000 to all citizens for three months, make COVID-19 tests free for all: Petition to PM



Shemin Joy, DHNS, New Delhi, MAR 28 2020, 15:26 IST | UPDATED: MAR 28 2020, 15:26 IST



Representative image. Credit: Reuters Photo

Over 900 activists and academicians under the banner 'Social Security Now' (SSN) campaign have petitioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi to transfer Rs 15,000 to all citizens for the next three months irrespective of whether they are "organised-unorganised (workers) or Below Poverty Line-Above Poverty Line (BPL-APL)" to enable them to tide over the crisis COVID-19 has brought in.

Claiming that the Rs 1.7 lakh crore package announced by the Centre was "inadequate", they also demanded that the COVID-19 tests be made free in both government and private hospitals and labs. They also wanted the government to ask corporates to compulsorily deposit at least 50 per cent of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds in an account earmarked for COVID-19 relief measures.

The petition by SSN, a national network of civil society and informal worker organisations, also demanded that the Public Distribution System must be accessible to all people, irrespective of BPL or residential status, to procure essential food items during the period of the pandemic.

"We are facing an unprecedented and colossal health, social, economic and humanitarian crisis caused by the COVID-19 attack. We are experiencing a sudden loss of income on account of the unforeseen break from employment or occupation for all people in India. The impact will be unimaginably severe on the informal workers and the self-employed who constitute more than 95 per cent of the Indian working population and on all those of the population who are dependent on them," it said.

The petition was signed by more than 900 people, including representatives from trade unions and other organisations like AITUC, National Domestic Workers Union, Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch, National Alliance for Peoples Movement and prominent academicians like economist Arun Kumar, literary critic Hiren Gohain, sociologist Nandini Sundar, Satish Deshpande, feminist scholar Nivedita Menon and political scientist Aditya Nigam, among others.

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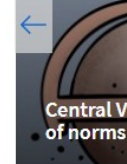
"This is the time for the government to act. The coronavirus attack provides an extraordinary situation to take decisive action. The government should take steps to overhaul the fundamental assumptions of social security system in India and its method of delivery. The government must now accept the principle of non-discriminatory Universal Social Security for those who are living and working in India. It will be impossible to do a means test based screening of who is eligible and who is not eligible for social security delivery at this point of time," the petition said.

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