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Other state matters

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The Hindu

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Decision on lockdown soon: Uddhav

CM hints at 8-day shutdown at all-party meeting; BJP, Congress want plan to support daily wagers

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

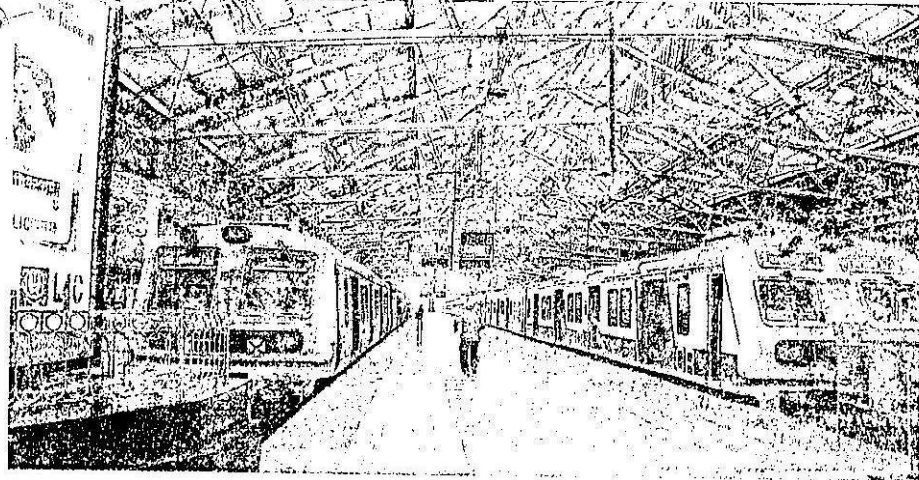
Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday said the government will be announcing its decision on a lockdown in the State within two days, hinting at a week's shutdown to break the chain of surging COVID-19 cases.

The Chief Minister also hinted that citizens may have to face few hardships in the coming days.

At an all-party meeting called by Mr. Thackeray to discuss a possible lockdown, a consensus was reached on the need to call for stricter lockdown at least for eight days.

All parties also asked the administration to ensure adequate time for preparation before announcing a lockdown.

The Chief Minister will meet with the State's Task



Pressing pause: An empty Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in Mumbai during the weekend lockdown imposed by the Maharashtra government on Saturday. • VIVEK BENDRE

Force on COVID-19 before the decision is announced.

The opposition BJP, while agreeing with the Chief Minister's stand, said the government must think about announcing a special package for daily wage labourers

as they would be most affected. "We discussed the present situation in the State. We are running out of vaccines, hospital beds and ventilators and the number of patients continue to rise. Drastic steps need to be ta-

ken to counter the spread of the disease. Lockdown is one such step. But the final decision will be announced by Chief Minister," Public Works Department Minister Ashok Chavan said after the meeting.

He said the lockdown is mainly aimed at breaking the chain and should not be long-lasting. "After initial lockdown there will be phase-wise relaxations," he said. All three parties of the MVA, namely Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Congress, stood together giving Mr. Thackeray a free hand to take the final call on a lockdown.

Congress Ministers, who had previously attended a video meeting with the party's interim president Sonia Gandhi and leader Rahul Gandhi, also stressed on the need to ensure that daily wage labourers do not suffer as it happened last year during the lockdown.

BJP's state unit president Chandrakant Patil said his party sought a comprehensive plan to counter the possible financial effects on the people of Maharashtra.