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CENTRE FOR NEW ECONOMICS STUDIES

A PANDEMIC'S CURSE



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THE SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19 STORM

It comes as no surprise that the most populated country in the world has now also become the one with the world's highest daily reported cases. The second wave of the coronavirus has brought in devastating effects -specifically in Pune which lies within Maharashtra, the worst affected state in the country.

The second wave has brought with it great mismanagement specially in cities worst affected including New Delhi, Pune, Bangalore and Lucknow where currently there is a dearth of essential resources to tackle the rising cases. In Pune, there are hardly any isolation wards. The previous year had seen a large number of schools and grounds being converted into isolation centres for covid patients. This year, not only are these avenues closed, but there are also no new initiatives taken by the Pune Municipal Corporation to tackle this issue.



Train Coaches are parked at Pune Railway Station as daily special trains are running for Migrant workers amid surge in rising cases of Covid-19 in Pune city.



A health worker gets vaccinated at a Vaccination centre in Pune city. Healthcare and Frontline medical workers were among the first to receive the Covid-19 vaccine as per Health Ministry guidelines.



Healthcare and frontline workers at a Vaccination centre in Pune city.

The PMC is the body that is largely looking after the measures which are to be taken against Covid, including the supply of necessities. Like many other cities in the country, Pune is facing an acute shortage of beds, ventilators, key drugs and oxygen supply. A significant reason for this can be the lack of coordination between the government of Maharashtra and the federal government over the political tensions persisting between them.

In Pune, the government machinery is struggling to provide adequate resources. With the waiting time for ventilators being scheduled for 4-5 days, even beds, especially beds with oxygen facilities are rarely found. There has also been a spike in the prices, with ICU beds costing around Rs.30,000 -Rs.50,000 per day and beds with oxygen facilities costing around Rs.60,000-Rs.80,000 for a period of one week in private hospitals.

The tsunami of covid cases all over the country has brought with it great struggles, specifically the struggle to breathe. Many people are facing breathlessness and require oxygen support, the latter now being a limited resource. In the national capital, the Delhi High Court took into account the dire situation because of low levels of available oxygen and passed directives to the Centre to comply.



A worker helps set up a Covid Care Centre of 110 beds with oxygen facility in premises of Ganesh Kala Krida Manch in Pune city.



Homeless stand in a queue to receive "Shiv Bhojan Thali", a free meal provided by the Maharashtra state government amid lockdown restrictions due to second wave of Covid-19 in Pune city (above and below) .



The issue of oxygen shortage in Pune and in various other states as well has also drawn criticism for the central government from all over the country. A number of people have died waiting for oxygen.

This is evident from the situation in David Sassoon Hospital, a huge district hospital in Pune which is now a dedicated covid care centre which currently poses a lack of beds to accommodate patients and oxygen.

The hospital has currently seen an influx of people from remote areas of Pune.

There has been an increase in the number of people from the rural

population who have tested positive for Covid-19. Many villages are getting isolated due to around 90% of the population in these areas testing positive.

Previously, the virus was unseen and unheard of in remote areas and rural villages. This part of the population was thus largely unaffected by the virus in health terms as it had spread mostly in cities and towns.

However, with the second wave, the deplorable situation in the country has affected these areas as well which were untouched by the virus for a long time.



Workers at Kailash Crematorium shift Mortuary freezer boxes provided by Pune Municipal Corporation for handling the load of Covid-19 dead bodies arriving at the crematorium. Around 60 bodies are cremated in an Electric Cremator daily, at Kailash Crematorium solely in Pune City.



Workers at the Crematorium keep record of earthen pots with ashes of cremated Covid-19 dead bodies in Pune city.

Pune is witnessing around 60-80 deaths on a daily basis. Looking at crematoriums, Pune has around four which particularly deal with the cremation of deceased coronavirus patients. These have electric furnaces fixed into them in order to facilitate cremation.

There has been a drastic increase in the number of bodies that are brought for cremation which is why the waiting time in crematoriums has run into hours. The crematoriums are thus overburdened due to which some of the bodies have to be sent for cremation in the wooden pyre and others have to be done in the nights.

The situation is similar all across the country. Crematoriums are finding it difficult to compete with the load of a large number of unprecedented deaths caused due to Covid-19. In the national capital region of the country i.e, Delhi, mass cremation of Covid-19 victims can be witnessed.



Pune Municipal Corporation Encroachment department seizes a vegetable vendor's cart as the lockdown restrictions were unfollowed in Navipeth, Pune city.

As Pune struggles with overcoming the second wave of the pandemic, it is important to realize what caused such a despicable situation to occur in the first place. The primary reason for the surge taking place would be the fact that people did not follow covid-19 appropriate behavior and believed that the worst of the pandemic was behind them.

As various states in the country grapple with the same issues, it is no doubt that the second wave of the coronavirus has wreaked havoc in the country. This wave is proving to be more infectious and deadlier than before. It has tested the healthcare infrastructure of the country. The failure of authorities to augment it, vaccinate aggressively and give importance to public health has only exacerbated the problem. It remains to be seen how the battle against the second wave will be fought by governments.

With States imposing restrictions within their own territories, there is also a concern with regards to migrant and daily-wage workers, both of which had suffered immensely during the first wave and the subsequent lockdowns. It remains to be seen how the battle against the second wave will be fought by the governments.

THE TEAM



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