

Gist of EPW May Week 1, 2021

Accumulation of Poor Health Infrastructure

Context:

The article analyses the effects and causes of the second wave of the pandemic in India.

Introduction:

- According to **WTO Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, the Covid-19 situation in India is a reminder of the destructive capabilities of the coronavirus.
- Most countries of the world faced medical services disruption, as per a WHO survey.
- The national capital Delhi has again witnessed a deadly situation as the second wave of the pandemic rages on.

The Second Wave of Covid-19;

- The disaster in the second phase is caused by a collective failure in preparedness.
- There have been inadequate efforts in ensuring adequate raw materials for vaccines, containers for transporting oxygen, virus testing, medicines, beds, and other facilities.
- The governments seem to fail and seem to have wasted the one year which it had for making adequate preparations.

Health Infrastructure in India:

- India spends 1% of the GDP on healthcare whereas countries like the United States have much higher spending on healthcare (8% of the GDP).
- 70% of health spending in India is from the pockets of the public.
- The early health programs in India were **disease-oriented**.
- In the due course, the development of the **General Healthcare Infrastructure** got neglected.
- India has only one doctor for 1,511 people and one nurse for 670 failing the WHO recommendation (one doctor per 1,000 population and one nurse per 300 population).
- India's effective coverage of universal health services was only 47 for 1990–2019, which is half that of major rich economies, and also lower than countries with lower development than India.
 - The effective coverage of universal health services for 1990-2019 was 51 in Bhutan, 54 in Bangladesh, 70 in China and Iran, 82 in the US.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has estimated the total funds needed for healthcare to be Rs 5.74 lakh crore, in a memorandum submitted to the [Fifteenth Finance Commission](#).
 - Of the above, Rs 5.13 lakh crore was needed for primary healthcare.

- The FC had agreed to only Rs 1.06 lakh crore for a five-year period.

Conundrum amongst the States:

- State government spendings show mega-scale disparities which make the situation worse.
 - The per capita health expenditure in Bihar was Rs 617 in 2018–19, it was Rs 2,048 in Kerala and Rs 6,207 in Goa.
 - Kerala has one of the best healthcare scenarios with more than five doctors, nurses, per 1,000 people.

Conclusion:

- With the continuous failures of the government of India in the healthcare sector, the private sector has been given a prime role.
 - But, the social and economic disparities in India need a government-provided Healthcare System.
 - The huge population of our country needs a healthcare system that can ramp up the network when needed.
 - The pandemic waves have shown us that there is no substitute for **Government-Provided Healthcare Infrastructure and Facilities** for a country like ours.
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