Saving the lives: On health facilities in India

Why in news?

India appears to have learnt little from the first wave of COVID-19 as a more dangerous second wave is devastating the country.

What are the weaknesses in India's health care infrastructure?

- India has wasted precious time before it scaled up the critical facilities for meeting the demands of the second wave that is accelerating at an unprecedented pace.
- This has lead to health-care facilities being engulfed and the number of deaths shows a sharp growth of 10.2%.
- There is disorder for hospital beds, oxygen, medicines, vaccines and even quick funeral are witnessed in many cities.
- Earlier WHO's Solidarity trial found no evidence for remdesivir in reducing mortality or reduction in the time for recovering.
- But now there is an excitement to get remdesivir for hospitalised patients which is leading to shortage of drugs.
- In COVID-19 clinical management protocol of health ministry, remdesivir may be considered in patients with moderate disease.
- Due to an acute shortage of beds, patients admit to hospital only when the disease gets severe.

What can we infer from this?

- Nearly after a year of pandemic, hospitals are stretched beyond their capacity and beds and medical oxygen supplies are in short of supply.
- Neither Union government nor State governments has made attempts to significantly augment medical oxygen supplies.
- According to reports, Union government took eight months to initiate steps to build oxygen generation plants that will reduce the reliance on pressurised liquid oxygen.
- Health ministry also reported that only 33 oxygen generation plants have been installed despite 162 got approvals.

What can be done now?

- Large buildings can be converted into temporary hospitals which can best

serve as isolation centres.

- They have to be provided with necessary oxygen supplies to individual beds and sufficient care workers.
- In the last year, private health facilities played a minor role in treating COVID-19 patients.
- But NITI Aayog in its 2021 report sees private players as a significant player in investing in health infrastructure and expanding to Tier 2 and Tier 3 locations.
- With the virus unlikely to get eliminated in the near future, being better prepared with vaccines and health-care facilities will be a prudent way to save lives.

Source: The Hindu

