

## **Mumbai Needs 858 Government Dispensaries, However, It Has A Mere 199, Reveals Report**

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According to the National Building Code norm, Mumbai needs 858 government dispensaries, shockingly, the island city has a mere 199 government dispensaries, revealed the "Ideal Mumbai Public Health Manifesto", released by the initiative, Mumbai First with Praja Foundation on Wednesday, December 22.

From the 187 public dispensaries, only 15 are operational for 14 hours, while the others are functional for 5 - 8 hours. This invariably hits the citizens, it is has constituted for. Further throwing light on the alarming sight of the healthcare management is the fact that 44 per cent and 45 per cent vacancies prevailed in the medical and para-medical staff respectively as of 2020, highlighted the manifesto.

With the BMC elections fast approaching, political leaders will be gearing with their propaganda. With the coronavirus pandemic depicting the profound impact the local municipal body plays in such an adverse situation, it is anticipated that health, during this year's local election will be a major talking point.

During the press conference, Yogesh Mishra, Research and Data Head, Praja Foundation elucidated that only 20 per cent of the health budget was put aside for the revenue expenses on primary healthcare. This entails programmes as well as dispensaries in the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai Health Department.

Mishra believes that owing to this, there persist loopholes in acquiring primary healthcare in the city. He drew contrast to the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic wherein public medical institutions were reeling under the effects of the virus. In spite of this, accessible permitted employees in the cumulative MCGM health facilities depicts a 31 per cent vacancy until 2020, he said.

Through the means of the manifesto, recommendations have been made in the line of an outcome-based budget that will enable development and amelioration in the access to primary healthcare in Mumbai, remarked Mishra. He further added that with Sustainable Development Goals 2030 being adopted in India in 2015, the developments aren't positive.

The manifesto mentions that whilst the SDG target for Tuberculosis is 0 TB cases per 1 lakh population, 298 TB cases per 1 lakh population were registered in 2020. The other target looked to end all epidemics, communicable diseases by 2030. However, in 2020-21, 15,623 malaria, 9,072 dengue and 2,941 HIV/AIDS cases were detected.

Dr Neville Mehta, CEO of Mumbai First elaborated on the reforms the city needs to undertake. Some of these include the real-time maintenance of cause of death data. This, he believes will indicate the steps to take in framing as well as implementing health schemes.

Mehta added that data-driven decisions, effective framing and utilizations of the budget, adequate allotment of infrastructure and human resources need to be emphasized to strengthen the healthcare system.

Additionally, on being asked by Mumbai Live how the government should balance the importance given to the novel coronavirus with other diseases, going forward, Mehta said that more infrastructure, facilities and manpower are imperative. If this happens, he believes the need will not arise to categorize diseases.

To this Mishra further mentioned, that the manifesto highlights an increase in total deaths in Mumbai as compared to 2019 in 2020 at 12 per cent excluding COVID-19. Whereas the total number of major diseases registered has declined by 29 per cent. Therefore, he remarks that certain precautionary measures should have been taken for the citizens.

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