Problems Faced by Social Service Volunteers in Covid-19 Pandemic Situation in West Bengal: A Case Study

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Abstract:

COVID-19 is a devastatingpandemic, which disrupted the social balances to endure a significant crisis in health sector. This sudden attack of novel corona virus created an utmost medical emergency. At the same time, the healthcare workers imparted their dedication and resilience against this health emergency like war. However, our capacity of health infrastructure has limitation to mitigate this huge emergency. The medical distribution system has also collapsed. In this situation, some organization or NGOs build their capacity and serve the society as much as possible. In this holy and noblejourney, they are facing many challenges, which may affect their physical and physiological health. Again, they are the worriers. They manage every challenges and issues but sometime they may lose their motivation. In this scenario, highlighting the major problems faced by the COVID volunteers in this pandemic situation under West Bengal condition is the theme of this article.

Key Words: Corona virus disease (COVID-19), COVID-19 pandemic, Civil Society and Volunteerism in the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Introduction:

The term "COVID-19" or "corona virus" has now become a terrifying name for people around the world. The virus firstlywas reported on December 31, 2019 in Wuhan, China (according to WHO data). Then it gradually spread all over the world and later India had noticed in the state of Kerala on 26 January 2020. Then in March, it entered our state i.e. West Bengal. A new path of struggle began.

The fighters in this way are all over the world, yet we can say that doctors, nurses and the police administration are actively fighting this war. When the first wave caused a lot of damage and when it was recovering, the second wave appears. In addition to the corona fighters who have played a key role in the fight, they are "voluntary organizations."

During this time, there is no way the doctors, nurses, health workers, and the administration have worked tirelessly. Along with them, the volunteers are running in different areas on their own initiative. They are not lagging behind in getting the patient to the hospital and the oxygen system. These voluntary organizations are fighting to the best of their ability. During the second wave of the Covid 19 epidemic, there was a huge gap in oxygen demand. The second wave took a deadly turn due to the rapid flow of oxygen in the medical field, which began on March 1, 2021 (according to WHO data). About 15 percent of people need oxygen therapy at this time. From March 2020, it took about 96 days, or three months, to infect more than 100 million people in India. However, in the second wave, the epidemic took just 10 weeks for more than 11 million people to become ill. As the number of infected people in the country began to increase vertically every day, so did the proportion of oxygen therapy patients (PATH-COVID-19, according to WHO data). On May 5th of 2020, it jumped to 18 million cubic meters (India Today, 12.05.2021). Thus the role of the voluntary organizations in handling the second wave after the first wave, with the help of their volunteers, organizing oxygen, emergency medicine, daily necessities, etc., is undeniable. In this scenario, highlighting the major problems faced by the COVID volunteers in this pandemic situation under West Bengal condition is the theme of this article.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Corona virus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age.

COVID-19 pandemic: The **COVID-19 pandemic**, also known as the **coronavirus pandemic**, is an ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The novel virus was first identified from an outbreak in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Attempts to contain it there failed, allowing the virus to spread worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. As of 3 April 2022, the pandemic had caused more than 490 million cases and 6.15 million deaths, making it one of the deadliest in history.

Civil Society and Volunteerism in the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Volunteer organizations are identified as the "third sector" of society. Voluntary organizations consist of many organizations, workers' organizations, religious organizations, community groups, etc. They are consideredas an important for democracy because they create social capital and social trust and values that help unite society and bring about social cohesion. Makes it easier. Their various functions are performed by defensive functioning partnerships, functions of control, functions of relief, and functions of democracy. They rely on "volunteerism", this doctrine is a fundamental and influential element of the individual or will or the universe. The "COVID-19" epidemic has created a number of issues in Indian civil society, such as Khandelwal (Khandelwal 2020) discusses the government's response and the role of civil society in overcoming the challenges that citizens face in epidemic situations. There were various problems with the plight of the expatriate workers, the isolation of the elderly, the supply of mask sanitizers and products, including medicines to the common afflicted. (April 6, 'NitiAyog')

The Central Government has reached out to 92,000 NGOs and civil society and volunteers to assist them in providing services through the inter-collaboration of the Thought Industry Association and international organizations. It is very gratifying that the voluntary organizations have taken up various encouraging challenges to organize free kitchens and health camps. They have created various innovative ways to provide medical, food and transportation for hospital admissions and assist senior citizens through GPS tracking on the Internet. It is worth mentioning that insulin was provided to diabetic patients by the Diabetes Association when the supply of medicines was low.

Undoubtedly, voluntary organizations are working to provide direct government and personal benefits to people who do not have Aadhaar cards, ration cards, voter cards and other government documents, formal addresses. There are many heartwarming stories of helping people reach the necessary goods even at individual levels. We should all help the disadvantaged people around us. An organization called 'Angel for the Angels' which has taken up the challenge of sending food to 200 people on a daily basis who live on the streets and platforms. The human response is so encouraging and a large number of people have joined hands to help each other despite their own difficulties and to reach out to a large number of disadvantaged people and to enhance the services and strengthen their own will. Nevertheless, two things need to be taken

into consideration: first, to provide assistance to those marginalized people who are deprived of all benefits through coordination with the government and various NGOs. Secondly, it is important to remember that I am not begging any beggars to help these citizens who are in this dire situation due to the epidemic. So the attitude of patronage should not be present. Remember that it is for the good of others. The dignity of the recipient must be taken care of with sensitivity. Civil society in India as a whole has found a way out of every catastrophe, be it a terrorist attack, a natural disaster or an epidemic.

Volunteer Involvement in India in COVID-19 pandemic situation:

The COVID-19 epidemic was a huge economic consequence for workers, entrepreneurs, industry and trade. The Center for Monitoring Indian Economy 'data shows that in February 2020, a month before the Indian government implemented the lockdown, the unemployment rate was 7.6% and rose to 23.5% in March (March 26-March 31, 2020) [first episode of the lockdown period]. These data show that the livelihoods of the informal sector and expatriate workers face a challenge. Losing workers has created emotional turmoil and stress in the relationship between the uncertainty of their future jobs and the current epidemic situation. The purpose and diary of daily life was lost from the working class. This volunteerism then helped to restore lost personal value and to influence and inspire one another. It was evident that there were a huge shortage for registered volunteers (Fig.1) to mitigate such a devastating pandemic in large population (Table. 1) of West Bengal.
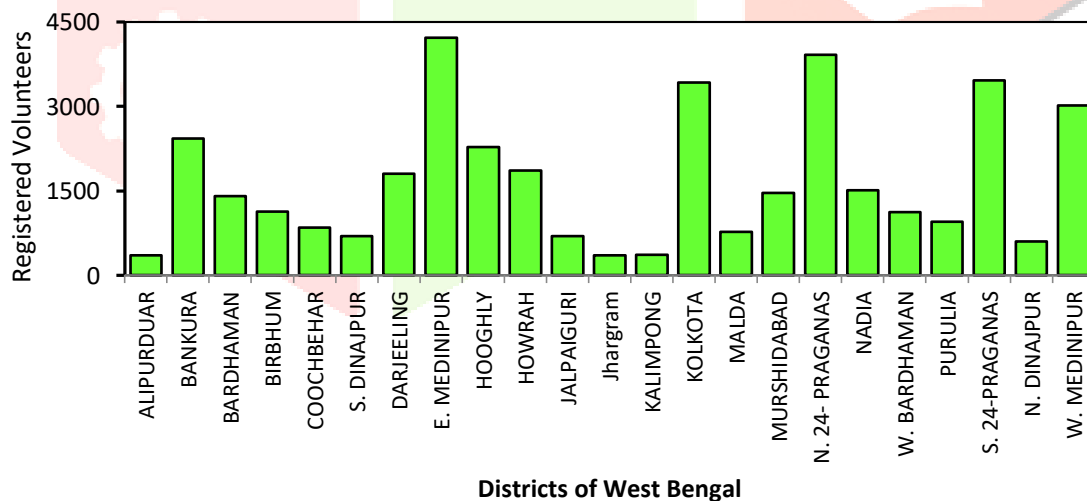

Fig.1 District wise data of registered COVID volunteers in West Bengal (https://covidwarriors.gov.in as on 16th Jun, 2021)

Table.1 District wise registered COVID volunteers data along with human population (Census, 2011)

No.	Districts (W.B)	Population (Census, 2011)	Reg. Volunteers (RV)	RV per person (%)
1	N.24Parganas	1,00,09,781	3914	0.039
2	S.24Parganas	81,61,961	3460	0.042
3	Barddhaman	77,17,563	2537	0.033
4	Murshidabad	71,03,807	1465	0.021
5	W. Medinipur	59,13,457	3019	0.051
6	Hooghly	55,19,145	2280	0.041
7	Nadia	51,67,600	1516	0.029
8	E. Medinipur	50,95,875	4219	0.083
9	Howrah	48,50,029	1861	0.038
10	Kolkata	44,96,694	3423	0.076
11	Malda	39,88,845	768	0.019
12	Jalpaiguri	38,72,846	698	0.018
13	Bankura	35,96,674	2428	0.068
14	Birbhum	35,02,404	1137	0.032
15	N. Dinajpur	30,07,134	599	0.020
16	Purulia	29,30,115	952	0.032
17	CoochBehar	28,19,086	844	0.030
18	Darjeeling	18,46,823	1808	0.098
19	N. Dinajpur	16,76,276	695	0.041

In 2020 (the COVID first wave), it was mostly about people not being able to access food and medicines but in 2021 (the COVID second wave) they mostly need are four things — plasma, oxygen, remdesivir, and hospital beds. All of these were short in supply.

The role of volunteers in the medical field in the epidemic of COVID-19:

Many states, including India and West Bengal, faced a major crisis in the supply and demand of oxygen cylinders during the second wave of the epidemic. Regarding the price of a cylinder in the market during the second wave, it can be said that the price of a cylinder increased from Rs. 6500 to Rs. 7000 and it increased from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. Significantly, West Bengal, like other parts of India, has suffered from an oxygen crisis. Interestingly, however, volunteers have been able to coordinate with oxygen providers for the problems of patients with oxygen deficiency through Facebook or a virtual platforms.

The Indian Red Cross Society has also launched a 24-hour blood supply help number to help everyone unite against COVID-19. These helpline numbers are - 011-23359379, 9319982104 and 9319982105. (Posted On: 21 APR 2020 5:47 PM by PIB Kolkata New Delhi, April 21, 2021)i-Volunteer is India's 1st and largest social initiative connecting volunteers to credible non-profits since 2001, in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune, and Chennai. They arrange low cost oxygen concentrator, medicine and medical equipments.

West Bengal Covid Aid Network (WBCAN), a group of 250-plus volunteers help people to meet the demand of low cost medical oxygen and medical equipments (The times of India, 04.05.2021).

CIGMA Foundation, has set up a website that works as a ready resource for Covid-19-related help in the Karnataka capital.

Iskonjadanath temple, Iskon Ludhiana Covid food service, Jain Amar Foundation, who has feeding COVID-19 affected people from 1th May, 2021 in Ludhiana, Punjab.

Jain international trade organisation (JITO) is providing free medical oxygen to needy patients (The Times of India, 11.05.2021).

Young volunteers, part of groups such as Citizens' Aid Collective and Covid Fighters India, are helping hundreds of coronavirus patients and their family members find hospital beds, medical oxygen and medicines in this time of crisis.On Instagram, a group of volunteers have created a page called Plasma Donors Delhi, which tries to connect willing plasma donors to Covid-19 patients in need. The main admin of the page is a 21-year-old student, AashiGoel.From arranging ICU beds to assisting with plasma and extending financial help, Little Hands Organisation is lending a helping hand to citizens in the Hyderabad.

Table.2　List of top 12 covid relief fundraisers or NGOs in India(Covid.giveindia.org , data as on 16th Jun, 2021)

No.	Fundraisers/NGOs	Founded by	Fund Raised (in Cr.)	Supporters	Website or #
1	Give India		447	1002366	covid.giveindia.org
2	One More Breath	Asha Garg, Neeraj Garg, Pooja Malik	18.9	617	onemorebreath.org
3	I Breath for India	Lara Dutta	18.4	1310	#IBreathforIndia
4	Priyanka Chopra Jones Foundation & Give India	Priyanka Chopra	9.5	14883	#togetherForIndia
5	KhaanaChahiye Foundation		6	9664	www.khaanachahiye.com
6	Campaign to help our theathcare heroes	GovindIyer	3.5	2512	
7	Mission oxygen		2.05	29	#Missionoxygen
8	Rural India breathe and stay safe	Arijit Singh	1.8	4723	
9	AIR foundation		1.6	537	
10	Axtria		1.28	658	#YouDonateWeMatch
11	We Work India		1.04	288	
12	Never Have I Ever		1	610	

"Give India" fundraiser (Covid.giveindia.org) in associate with many NGOs helping to mitigate the gaps in heathcare and other critical needs (Table.2). The LGBTQ community, in particular, has been one of the worst-hit as they could not earn a living during this period. Survival has been a challenge. Through our NGO partner, Humsafar Trust, ration kits were provided to the members of the community in Delhi, ensuring a month's supply of food. Through our NGO partner Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM) we have provided 500 concentrators, an oxygen generation plant and a mobile X-ray machine to augment the health infrastructure in five districts of the Karnataka. To support the efforts of Government of Karnataka in overcoming the crisis, GiveIndia procured 500 5LPM concentrators, and 100 were rushed to Haveri. The rest were also being distributed across the Karnataka government hospitals with similar needs. 2,900 more OCs had arrived in Delhi from the US and were getting ready to be distributed to NGOs and other healthcare facilities to support over 34,000 COVID patients in Chennai, Bangalore and Kolkata. An isolation space for COVID patients with mild symptoms has just been opened at one of the @oyo properties in Bangalore. The 22-room hotel will provide free food, accommodation and medical services to patients referred by the municipal authorities. #O2forIndia, an initiative by GiveIndia and Ola Foundation to deliver free oxygen concentrators at a patient's doorstep - and picked up when no longer required - is now live in Delhi too.

In this current pandemic scenario, our study addresses the constraints that a COVID volunteers faced during their services and also their socio-physio level issues.

Methodology:

Methodology is the process of following specific methods and techniques in research. Method theory is the kind of analysis that shows how a research progresses. That is, methodology is a framework in the research process. In any case, the survey requires proper methodology to implement any research subject. Any survey without a precise method becomes inconsistent.

1. Selection of research topics:

In order to do research on something, first of all it is necessary to select a specific subject. Therefore, in choosing the subject of research, the researcher has to take some subjects as essential. The research field should not be too large and from where data can be easily collected.The researcher should look at the selection of research topics so that he / she can complete the research within the stipulated time.The researcher has to choose a subject that will not lead to any moral or social complications. No field should be selected as a subject of research which is not connected with reality. So with all these things in mind, the subject I have chosen for my research is inextricably linked with the current situation. The subject of my research is that "voluntary organizations are working in the Pandemic situation and are constantly facing various obstacles and problems". Not only in India, but all over the world, the Corona epidemic is being

fought as well as the Corona fighters. . The main topic of my research is how these volunteers are doing their job well by ignoring various problems.

2 .Research space selection:

The selection of research space is very important for research. Due to the large size, it is difficult to collect data, so in the case of research, a specific place has to be selected as a research field so that the appropriate space can fulfill the purpose of research. So for the current epidemic situation I have collected information from voluntary organizations in some places in the state of West Bengal.

3. Questionnaire construction:

Questionnaires are an essential part of data collection. Questionnaires are a way of measuring. The questionnaire needs to be clear and understandable in order to measure accurately. This is the sum of many questions. The questionnaire is designed keeping in mind the content of the research and it is made in very simple and straightforward language so that the respondents can easily understand the type of question and answer it.

4. Sampling:

Among the various methods of data collection in sociological research, the sampling method is the most important.

It is very complex and difficult to collect information from everyone to complete the research work so I have used purposeful sampling method in this case and this type of sampling I collect data from such respondents who will be able to answer my research needs. I did.

5. Interview Method:

The interview method is one of the methods used to collect information directly in sociological research. It is a type of conversation where there is a specific purpose. The main purpose of this conversation is to gather information about the specific topic from the interviewer.

My interview method was "telephonic interview" because at present the opportunity to interview outside the home in an epidemic situation is completely closed so I had to carry out my research work in this method.

6. Subject comprehension method:

I have adopted a case study method to explore the subject of my research. This is especially helpful in qualitative research in data collection. A case study is a research technique that describes in depth the real-life context of an event group or individual.

7. Presentation of information:

It is important to present clearly all the information that has been collected for the research. In order to make the subject easy and understandable to everyone, the information has been arranged in a very simple and easy language and some images have been added.

8. Limitations of the study:

There are some limitations in all types of research, so overall my paper is not free from limitations. The limitations of this study are:

The acceptability of my survey is greatly reduced when I communicate with the respondent by telephone. Because if the respondent is hesitant to pick up the phone from an unknown number, then there is a need to have a familiar field.

One of the purposes of my research is to select the disadvantages of volunteers but many times their disadvantages are not social based. Some disadvantages also occur in personal cases which they do not want to share.

- Since my research time was limited, it was not possible for volunteers to bring in a large amount of information.
- Since this research work is not a joint research work, it was not possible to collect a large number of data in a single way.
- Since many volunteers work closely with government organizations, they are reluctant to provide much information due to governmental and administrative complexities.

Case studies:

Table.3 Decription of the Covid volunteers and their retative problems according to this study

SI. No.	Name	Organization	Occupation	Members	Registared or not	Covid aid activities	Problem faced
1	Jagriti Ghosh	"Bahurupi Mukhoser arale"	Private school teacher	160	society registered	Blood Donation Camps, Saturdays and Sundays to teach and educate children culturally and to conduct health camps at places like old age homes and orphanages.	The organization has to face some political problems while distributing food to a group of people who want to stop giving them food because they were doing the same thing there. After that the problem is solved. The work was carried out smoothly with the cooperation of the police administration and all the people there.
2	Shuvrangshu Das	Dhulamati	Physiology Masters Student	6 registered members and 64 working member	society register	Blood donation camp, distribution of new clothes during Durga Puja, supply of various essential items and medicines including oxygen cylinders during Corona. (Fig.2.A,B,C,D)	When the organization goes out to distribute clothes or do some other service work in the village, everyone thinks it is a government grant, the idea of volunteerism is very few among them so if they don't give new clothes to everyone in those places there is a risk of public harassment and social disturbance.
3	Anirban Bag	Beniashokla	Teaching, writing, business	36	Government registered	The organization works on natural disasters such as ' Yash' ' Amphan'. Distribute emergency medicine, baby food supply, etc. in pandemic situations.	In the current situation, when they were going to a village with relief fund items, they had to face various administrative complications such as the signature of the gram panchayat and the signature of the village member, which was later settled and they were able to prolong their work.
4	Anirban Goswami	Red Volunteers	Student	50 (Bankura Town)	Society Register	Supply of various essential items and medicines including oxygen cylinders (Fig.4B.C)	To manage oxygen from one patient to another patient is very complicated issue. The existing patient's family do not want to return the oxygen cylinder after use.
5	Arpan Banerje e	Smile (Smiles We Smile Together)	Teaching	60 people in Bankura. 100 in West Bengal	Society Register	Arranging Blood Donation Camp, Oxygen Cylinder Arrangement, Emergency Medicine and	There is always the fear or risk of a public harassment even if there is no administrative problem at the individual level.

						Medical Kit(Fig.3)	
6	Mrinmo yeeDha bal	Piramal Foundatio n	MSW Masters Student	30		Works in association with "NitiAyo g"	Vaccination Awareness Program	Basically, the work is done through phone calls, in which case they have to face network problems and problems like not talking on the phone for a long time or cutting off the phone.
7	Debashi shChata yit	Betikrom	Businessma n	60		Society Register	Blood donation camps, distribution of old clothes, delivery of extra food to the hungry people at the ceremony house. In Corona situations all sorts of work has been done from hospitalization to searching their home to delivering things to their home and burial.	There have been many administrative and social complications. One of them was that the organization wanted to make a school an isolation home but it was not possible due to administrative complications.
8	Kisan De	"Matrivu mi"	Students	40		Society Register	Basically providing food to the children, providing food to the migrants labourers on the way to and from the railway station and delivering the necessary items from house to house in corona situation.	In one village a man was attacked by Corona and had to face social boycott there and in the end all of these volunteer organizations were able to handle the situation by convincing the people.
9	Soumen Kundu	Pratyasha	Teaching	50		Society Register	Blood donation camps, a little bit of going to the slums to make people aware of how to follow the corona rules and rescue the patient during corona and hospitalization.	In a house where old men and women are affected, their son leaves his wife and leaves. The members of the organization rescued them after receiving the news and now they are completely healthy but these members have to face family complications.
10	Gaurab Chatterj ee	Chhottopr ayas	Student	12		Volunteer team (not yet registered)	Delivering food at home, writing leaflets and graffiti in different places to make people aware about corona, planting trees, distributing masks etc.(Fig.4A)	As they have to work in the field, there is a risk in their lives, but they have benefited a lot from the administrative and social side, even if they do not face many problems, they said.
11	Isha Dutta	Sarang Welfare Society	Student	60		Governm ent Register	Depending on the circumstances of the event, distribution of	As they have organized various program in different places, so, she

					clothes, going to school, giving sanitary napkins, etc.	faced a little travel related problem.
12	Riya Pal	Pratham Education Foundation	Student	12	Government registered	Child education. Vaccination Awareness in the current Corona situation, and various speech related YouTube videos and activities to educate children.	There are various problems to be faced. Since these tasks are done through phone calls, network is a big issue. Also, many people do not know how to use a smartphone and many parents who cut off the phone before the end of the conversation.

Fig.1 Contribution of the Covid volunteers, A. Medical oxygen arrangement and delivery,   B. Mass awareness rally including face mask and sanitizer distribution, C. Blood donation camp initiative and D. Mass awareness program (Dhulamati, NGO, Bankura, W.B).

Fig.3 Medical oxygen arrangement and delivery to the severe Covid patients by the Covid volunteers (Smile- we smile together, NGO)

Fig.4 Contribution of the Covid volunteers, A. Home delivery of the food and essential goods to the people during lockdown (Chhottoprayas, NGO), B. Funaral of the Covid dead body by the Red Volunteers, C. Home sanitization initiative by the Red Volunteers.

Discussion:

I have worked with 12 samples (Table. 3), some of them are government registered and some are society registered and non-registered organizations. In this epidemic situation, it is most commendable that the voluntary organizations are providing services to the people in parallel with the government. In the event of an epidemic, the transportation system is completely closed, they have faced many problems to reach different places and the cost of travel has been much higher. As a result, they had to keep some money in the reserve fund to work, so when Corona was at a high level, it wanted to donate to some sectors, but it was tied to the rules.

- When volunteers engage in corona patient care in a variety of ways, family members are afraid of them if in any way they themselves and their family are affected.
- Talking to all these organizations and learning about their experiences, one can conclude that they have said one thing for everyone - 'Every human being should be a human being and should engage himself in helping others as much as he can or at the risk of not helping others. The fear is the highest.

Conclusion: Necessary health care organizations need to be decentralized. Because the size of health care and infrastructure is different at district and state level. To adopt the method accordingly:

- A certain price must be set for essential healthcare products like ambulance, oxygen, essential medicines whose prices will remain the same across the country. All people should be covered under the health insurance scheme. As it has started in many states.
- Emphasis should be placed on the collection of evidence-based data in case of review of Covid-19. District and state hospitals have to work in accordance with that directive. There is a need to have

specific instructions on how to take care of the patient at home, what steps to take in the hospital in accordance with international rules.

- In order to improve the health system, the private sector should also be used. Human resources must be used properly. The government also has to provide PPE kits to everyone and provide training on medical care.

- Vaccines must be made available to all. The state government has to ensure that everyone gets the vaccine dose on priority basis. It is not good to leave the vaccine completely private.

- The number of active patients may increase again in the future. So we should be prepared for advance warning. However, in the case of COVID and the rest of the information, transparency in the statistics is required according to the specific model.

- The government should compensate those who lost their lives or lost their jobs during the coronation period while making a living. It has happened in several states. These steps are needed to turn the wheel of the economy and increase demand.

- We hope that every social person will take part in the COVID journey for enhancing social welfare and developments in respect to their utmost capacity with safe guidelines.

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