

Important Vocab for the Editorial

1. **infernal** (adjective) – horrible, annoying, irritating.
2. **inferno** (noun) – a very intense fire; blaze, conflagration, firestorm.
3. **amid** (preposition) – in the middle of, surrounded by; during.
4. **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
5. **on the rise** (phrase) – increasing.
6. **alongside** (preposition) – together with.
7. **act on** (phrasal verb) – follow, comply with, act in accordance with.
8. **merciless** (adjective) – ruthless, pitiless, relentless; harsh, severe.
9. **onslaught** (noun) – attack, incursion, invasion.
10. **public health** (noun) – the branch of medicine handling public health; public health is also the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities through education, policy making and research for disease and injury prevention.
11. **combat** (verb) – fight, tackle, confront, defy/resist.
12. **scourge** (noun) – affliction, bane, curse, plague.
13. **strain** (verb) – damage, impair, overtax, overburden, exert excessively, stretch/push to the limit.
14. **infrastructure** (noun) – the basic physical or organisational structure or framework.
15. **hit** (verb) – affect badly, devastate, damage.
16. **deadly** (adjective) – fatal, lethal, life-threatening.
17. **witness** (verb) – see, observe, view, notice.
18. **suburb** (noun) – outlying district, outskirts.
19. **coronavirus** (CoV) (noun) – a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death. (Courtesy: [WHO](#))
20. **stretch** (verb) – put a strain on, put great demands on, overtax.
21. **blaze** (noun) – fire, flames, conflagration, inferno.
22. **in particular** (phrase) – particularly, specifically, especially, specially.
23. **learnings** (noun) – lesson.

24. **put out** (phrasal verb) – issue, publish, release, make public, publicize.
25. **prioritise** (verb) – make a point of, highlight, call attention to (something as very important).
26. **compliance** (noun) – conformity, observation, adherence.
27. **strategy** (noun) – plan of action (in order to achieve a more expansive set of political, economic, and security interests).
28. **accreditation** (noun) – authorization, permission, license.
29. **act upon** (phrasal verb) – comply with, act in accordance with, follow.
30. **context** (noun) – circumstances, conditions, situation.
31. **given** (preposition) – considering, taking into account, bearing in mind.
32. **devastating** (adjective) – destructive, ruinous, disastrous.
33. **recur** (verb) – happen again, reoccur, occur again.
34. **lose no time** (phrase) – be quick, hurry up, move quickly, hasten.
35. **comprehensive** (adjective) – all-inclusive, broad-based, complete/thorough.
36. **audit** (noun) – inspection, examination, assessment, investigation.
37. **in sight** (phrase) – noticeable, visible, in view; near at hand.
38. **oversight** (noun) – supervision, surveillance, superintendence, inspection, review, direction, control.
39. **judicial oversight** (noun) – It refers to the process by which the judiciary examines the legality of any action of a person or authority, public or private, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution or any law of a country.
40. **systematic** (adjective) – methodical, structured, organized, well ordered, planned.
41. **mishap** (noun) – accident, trouble, problem, difficulty.
42. **conflagration** (noun) – flames, blaze, fire, inferno.
43. **take cognisance of** (phrase) – notice, attend to, take into account, give attention to.
44. **suo motu** (phrase) – Latin term means “on its own motion”. It is used where a government agency acts on its own knowledge.
45. **vaccination** (noun) – treatment with a vaccine to protect against a particular disease; immunization.
46. **lockdown** (noun) – an emergency protocol implemented by the authorities that prevents people from leaving from a place; An extended state of confinement/encirclement/isolation of a person by the authority.

47. **take up** (phrasal verb) – pursue, engage in, become involved in (an activity or course of action).
48. **pressing** (adjective) – urgent, critical, crucial, important.
49. **pertain to** (verb) – concern, relate to, be connected with.
50. **scrutiny** (noun) – examination, inspection, investigation.
51. **evidently** (adverb) – obviously, palpably, seemingly, apparently.
52. **bureaucracy** (noun) – officials (in the administration, government, the establishment) as a group.
53. **on one's own** (phrase) – alone, all alone, by oneself, all by oneself, independently, single-handedly.
54. **diligently** (adverb) – carefully, attentively, thoroughly.
55. **regulation** (noun) – rule, order, directive, procedure, guideline.
56. **call for** (phrasal verb) – require, publicly ask/necessitate, demand.
57. **equip** (verb) – prepare (for a particular task/situation).
58. **exhaust system** (noun) – a system by which the indoor air is continuously exhausted to the outdoors.
59. **accumulation** (noun) – amassing, gathering, stockpiling, hoarding.
60. **ventilation** (noun) – the supplying of fresh air to a room.
61. **cut-out** (noun) – device.
62. **periodic** (adjective) – regular, repeated, recurrent.
63. **evacuation** (noun) – the act of moving people from a dangerous place; depopulation, clearance, emptying.
64. **undoubtedly** (adverb) – admittedly, doubtless, beyond question.
65. **retrofit** (verb) – to add something to the one already done/constructed/manufactured.
66. **on the go** (phrase) – very active, busy, occupied.
67. **successive** (adjective) – consecutive, continuous.
68. **business as usual** (phrase) – a normal state of affairs, the daily round, routine, a normal pattern, regularity.
69. **extract** (verb) – obtain, get, take out (by effort or force).
70. **a heavy price** (phrase) – a bad effect, suffering, damage on something.

Infernal infernos: On hospital fires amid the pandemic

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As hospital fires are on the rise alongside a pandemic, Maharashtra must act on safety

Maharashtra has been facing the merciless onslaught of COVID-19 cases, but its public health response has also had to combat a second, connected scourge of hospital fires. In recent days, the State has been adding, on average, over 60,000 cases and losing a few hundred lives daily in the second wave of the pandemic, straining its infrastructure and institutions. It is also frequently hit by deadly fires, of the kind witnessed on Friday in the ICU of a small hospital in Mumbai's suburb of Virar, where at least 15 patients severely ill with the coronavirus died. With about seven lakh active cases now, many of the patients in the State require oxygen support and hospitals are stretched to the limit. Many are small institutions, while a number of facilities are simply not built for purpose, such as the hospital located in a mall in Mumbai's Bhandup area where several lives were lost in a blaze last month. Now that many COVID-19 hospital fires have been reported during the first peak of the pandemic last year and later, in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh in particular, State authorities should be able to document their learnings and put out a checklist to save patients. They should clarify whether fire safety guidelines for hospitals issued by the Centre in September last year, prioritising a strict compliance strategy, third party accreditation on safety, and adoption of a fire response plan were acted upon. This is particularly important in Maharashtra's context, given that devastating fires have been recurring, and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray should lose no time in ordering a comprehensive audit.

With no end in sight to serious hospital fires, there may be a case for judicial oversight and systematic inquiries into such mishaps. COVID-19 has turned into a conflagration, and the Supreme Court has taken *suo motu cognisance* of many aspects of pandemic management, such as availability of oxygen and essential drugs, method and manner of vaccination, and declaration of lockdowns. Nearly 10 High Courts have taken up pressing matters pertaining to COVID-19. It would be logical to add fire safety to such scrutiny, to make accidents rare. Evidently, State bureaucracies can achieve a lot more on their own, if they diligently implement existing regulations. There is a professional knowledge base available with important features. It calls for ICUs to be equipped with an exhaust system to prevent smoke accumulation in a fire, ventilation cut-outs to stop a blaze from spreading, periodic maintenance of safety equipment and, very importantly, an evacuation plan for the sickest patients, who may be attached to life-saving equipment. It is undoubtedly complicated to retrofit poorly designed hospitals for high safety standards, especially when it has to be executed on the go, and every bed is precious in the pandemic. But as each successive blaze proves, business as usual may extract a heavy price. Patients should be able to go to a hospital without the fear of fires threatening their lives there.

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