

A view at Mumbai civic hospitals: Rats, leaking washrooms, overflowing garbage bins

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Sadaguru Pandit - Hindustan Times



A rat at KEM Hospital in Mumbai.(HT)

If you notice rats making way through banana peels, half eaten apples, leaking washrooms or overflowing garbage bins while accompanying your loved ones to the largest medical facilities in Mumbai, don't be surprised. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan might have gained momentum across India but civic hospitals in the city are far from providing clean and hygienic surroundings to its patients.

A day after two senior citizens suffered rat bites in Shatabdi Hospital, HT found leakages, water logging, overflowing garbage bins and food waste in and around KEM, Sion and Nair hospitals — the tertiary care hospitals of Mumbai, providing an ideal environment for major disease carriers — rats and mosquitoes.

“The ground floor itself smells so bad owing to dirty washrooms that patients start puking. The middle lobby is just filled with litter and food waste. We see rats running around all the time,” said Ratnakar Jawhar, relative of a patient from Nair Hospital.

While open ducts, lift vents, pipelines and washrooms are breeding grounds for rats, lack of iron nets, open windows and false ceilings provide them easy access inside the wards and lobbies of the hospital.

All thanks to civic authorities’ complete negligence towards sanitation. Officials on the other hand said the ones to blame are patients and their families who provide source of food to rats.

A sanitation official from the civic body said not preaching, but practice can create awareness among people. “We have enough nurses and ward boys to stop people from throwing garbage in the open. Fining people for littering is also another option because in absence of a deterrent, people won’t change their behaviour,” said the official.

Talking to HT, politicians said the approach of the administration is equally responsible for the lack of sanitation and hygiene in hospitals. “Patients told me that the bedsheets aren’t changed for days inside wards. They are charging people for changing clothes, wheelchairs and using washrooms. The state of hospitals is vulnerable in terms of sanitation,” said Manisha Chaudhry, MLA from Kandivli who visited Shatabdi Hospital after the incident.

Rajan Naringrekar, insecticide officer of BMC, said the pest control department has taken all the possible preventive measures to control the rat menace. “False ceilings provide the rats easy

access but our officers are regularly inspecting these areas to contain the rat menace. We use rat poison and traps to minimise the number of rats. We need help from people, who can at least not throw food and other items that attract rats,” said Naringrekar.