



The Covid-19 pandemic that has affected the world since early last year continues to rule the way every global citizen's lives are affected. As the first wave weathered off, India was reasonably placed till Mid March 2021 where the daily numbers of Covid-19 cases were approx. 20,000 per day which is a well controlled number considering a population of 1.39 billion people.

Then, the second wave hit like a tsunami and with the new double mutant virus B.1.617, the country was caught off guard with only a small portion of the country being vaccinated till then. There was government complacency in not anticipating the second wave to hit so hard as the vaccination drive should have been in overdrive irrespective of the status of the virus impact at any point. There were pre-emptive signs of the double mutant virus detected in the UK in Sep 2020 and India should have been better prepared in time which as we were not, and it took the country by storm.

India's health management system needs to be upgraded in a large way and was exposed in spite of the relentless and selfless efforts of the medical fraternity being the real heroes in these tough times. The numbers rose to appx 410,000 covid Cases per day at it's peak in early May 2021, though there is much improvement on the numbers at less than 200,000 per day as of date. These numbers are dropping by the day with vaccines administered in full flow. The government has an ambitious plan of ensuring the entire country is vaccinated by the end of the year. This could be possible by ramping up production of domestically made vaccines as well as the support of several countries in helping India during it's worst crisis with imports of millions of doses.

At the same time, the Western media has projected India in a poor light when they were also unable to handle the crisis at earlier times in their respective countries being under prepared and as a percentage of population, Covid-19 deaths were far greater in some developed countries. Global media including the Indian media has to be far more sensitive to ensure the human race can be made aware of the severity of the pandemic and at the same time, project more positivity as the pandemic is taking a big toll on the mental health of millions across the globe.

The Pandemic Effect on The Indian Fastener Industry

The Indian Fastener Industry is obviously affected, too. With lockdowns in many big states, sustaining business and growth has been extremely difficult. Though there are several end user industries doing very well with positive business share extended to the fastener industry, the impact of the second wave has resulted in a large number of worker and staff families contracting Covid-19 majorly affecting smooth manufacturing functioning. Expansion plans with exploring new technologies which are done often at trade shows or business travel, have been stalled by most.

And a big obstacle in growth has been the spiralling prices of domestic steel. This has been by far the greatest spurt in steel prices with increases at far too many intervals for anyone's liking. When supplying to OEMs who generally place annual open orders with their vendors, passing on price increases is extremely difficult as per protocol when the process of price increase through a system takes up to a couple of months and within that period another few steel jumps have occurred. This puts the vendor in an extremely precarious position of being able to supply at viable prices.

Another massive repercussion due to Covid-19 has been on cashflows. With a major part of the industry working on credits, the national lockdown last year for a couple of months and partial lockdowns this year have hit the businesses hard with a ripple effect on the payment realisations. Sustaining cash work flows especially at increased steel prices have hit the MSME's (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises) hard with many out of business and others struggling to stay afloat. Those businesses which can survive till next year will thrive as India being the sixth largest economy in the world will stand to gain largely once there is stability on the pandemic front.



by Abhijat Sanghvi, FAI President

Covid-19 is here to stay and adds to another list of illnesses that we would have to endure with the only option of regular vaccination to counter this pandemic. Last year, global businesses have had to re-invent themselves with online meetings, work from home policies, etc., and as optimistic as we wish to be, businesses will not operate in the same manner as pre-Covid-19 days.

The greatest positivity we can take from the pandemic is our ability to adapt. We would have to adapt to a new way of life and innovate to keep ahead of an event which has been unprecedented to the extent it has impacted our entire world. ■

