

INDIA: Family's 'heartbreaking' decision after mother's COVID death

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A woman's family was reportedly forced to transport her dead body on the back of a motorbike as India's Covid-19 crisis worsens.

The woman's body was placed between her son and son-in-law. Source: Twitter/ Eric Feigl-Ding

Andhra Pradesh (INDIA): Heartbreaking video has emerged of the moment a woman's family was reportedly forced to transport her dead body on the back of a motorbike as India's Covid-19 crisis worsens.

The Covid victim, aged in her 50s, was propped up between her son and son-in-law on the bike as they were pulled over by a police officer in the town of Palasa in the Srikakulam district on Monday, Indian publication The Hans India reported.

The woman had fallen ill before seeking medical advice at a nearby hospital, local reports say.

After being told her oxygen levels were low, she was sent for a CT scan, but on her return to the hospital, her condition worsened and died.

Their rickshaw driver demanded they evacuate his vehicle and their desperate attempts to secure an ambulance proved unsuccessful.

The son and son-in-law reluctantly decided to sit the woman upright on one of their motorbikes in-between them before taking her body to her native village 15 kilometres away.

Video shows the men explaining their situation to the police officer before he allows them to proceed.

Epidemiologist Dr Eric Feigl-Ding, a senior fellow with the Federation of American Scientists, shared the video on his Twitter page.

He said he had verified the video and an Indian friend had told him the video was "probably the saddest thing" they'd seen so far in the pandemic.

The video prompted a wave of comments, with many online in shock at the conditions facing Indians as the country neared breaking point.

"The poor family," one person wrote.

"I pray these young men have so much support and love to help them through this," another said.

"This is heartbreaking," a third person added.

Fears India's cases could be as high as half a billion

While India has officially recorded close to 18 million Covid-19 cases, experts are warning its actual number of

infections could be closer to a devastating half a billion cases, Ramanan Laxminarayan â€” director of the Centre for Disease Dynamics, Economics and Policy in New Delhi â€” told CNN.

India's 323,144 new cases over the past 24 hours stood below a worldwide peak of 352,991 hit on Monday, and 2,771 new deaths took the toll to 197,894.

But the fewer confirmed infections were largely due to a drop in testing, according to health economist Rijo M John of the Indian Institute of Management in Kerala, a southern state.

"This should not be taken as an indication of falling cases, rather a matter of missing out on too many positive cases," he said on Twitter.

India's death toll continues to grow by thousands each day. Source: AP

India has converted hotels and railway coaches into critical care facilities to make up for the shortage of beds, but experts say the next crisis will be a lack of healthcare professionals.

Aid from Western countries has begun to arrive as authorities desperately try to distribute oxygen to deprived areas.

India's first "Oxygen Express" train pulled into New Delhi, laden with about 70 tonnes of oxygen from an eastern state, but the crisis has not abated in the city of 20 million people at the epicentre of the world's deadliest wave of infections.

- Yahoo, With Reuters