

# Low on beds, oxygen, India adds global high 314K virus cases

April 22 2021, by Ashok Sharma

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Relatives of COVID-19 patients wait for refill of their oxygen cylinders in New Delhi, India, Wednesday, April 21, 2021. India reported a global record of more than 314,000 new infections Thursday as a grim coronavirus surge in the world's second-most populous country sends more and more sick people into a fragile health care system critically short of hospital beds and oxygen. (AP Photo)

India reported a global record of more than 314,000 new infections Thursday as a grim coronavirus surge in the world's second-most populous country sends more and more sick people into a fragile health care system critically short of hospital beds and oxygen.

The 314,835 infections added in the past 24 hours raise India's total past 15.9 million cases since the pandemic began. It's the second-highest total in the world next to the United States. India has nearly 1.4 billion people.

Fatalities rose by 2,104 in the past 24 hours, raising India's overall death toll to 184,657, the Health Ministry said.

A large number of hospitals are reporting acute shortages of beds and medicine and are running on dangerously low levels of [oxygen](#).

The New Delhi High Court on Wednesday ordered the government to divert oxygen from industrial use to hospitals to save people's lives. "You can't have people die because there is no oxygen. Beg, borrow or steal, it is a national emergency," the judges said responding to a petition by a New Delhi [hospital](#) seeking its intervention.

The government is rushing oxygen tankers to replenish supplies to hospitals.

India's Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Thursday that "demand and supply is being monitored round the clock." He said in a tweet that to address the exponential spike in demand, the government has increased the quota of oxygen for the worst-hit seven states.



Multiple funeral pyres of those patients who died of COVID-19 disease are seen burning at a ground that has been converted into a crematorium for mass cremation of coronavirus victims, in New Delhi, India, Wednesday, April 21, 2021. (AP Photo)

Lockdowns and strict curbs have brought pain, fear and agony to many lives in New Delhi and other cities.

In scenes familiar across the country, ambulances are seen rushing from one hospital to another, trying to find an empty bed. Grieving relatives are lining up outside crematoriums where the arrival of dead bodies has jumped several times.

"I get numerous calls every day from patients desperate for a bed. The

demand is far too much than the supply," said Dr. Sanjay Gururaj, a doctor at Bengaluru-based Shanti Hospital and Research Center.

"I try to find beds for patients every day, and it's been incredibly frustrating to not be able to help them. In the last week, three patients of mine have died at home because they were unable to get beds. As a doctor, it's an awful feeling," Gururaj said.



Multiple funeral pyres of those patients who died of COVID-19 disease are seen burning at a ground that has been converted into a crematorium for mass cremation of coronavirus victims, in New Delhi, India, Wednesday, April 21, 2021. (AP Photo)

Yogesh Dixit, a resident of northern Uttar Pradesh state, said earlier this week that he had to buy two oxygen cylinders at 12,000 rupees (\$160) each, more than twice the normal cost, for his ailing father because the

state-run hospital in Lucknow had run out of supplies.

He bought two "because the doctors can ask for another oxygen cylinder at any time," he said, adding that he had to sell his wife's jewelry to meet the cost.

The main cremation ground at Lucknow, the state capital, received nearly 200 bodies on Sunday. Shekhar Chakraborty, 68, described the scene "The bodies were everywhere, they were being cremated on sidewalks meant for walking. I have never such a flow of dead bodies in my life," he said.

In Kanpur, another city in Uttar Pradesh state, 35 new temporary platforms have been set up on Bithoor-Sidhnath Ghat stretch along Ganges River to cremate bodies.



A metro train runs behind as a man wearing mask as a precaution against the coronavirus walks through a bridge in Kochi, Kerala state, India, Thursday, April 22, 2021. India reported a global record of more than 314,000 new infections Thursday as a grim coronavirus surge in the world's second-most populous country sends more and more sick people into a fragile health care system critically short of hospital beds and oxygen. (AP Photo/R S Iyer)



A man wearing mask as a precaution against the coronavirus works at a fish market in Kochi, Kerala state, India, Thursday, April 22, 2021. India reported a global record of more than 314,000 new infections Thursday as a grim coronavirus surge in the world's second-most populous country sends more and more sick people into a fragile health care system critically short of hospital beds and oxygen. (AP Photo/R S Iyer)



People wearing masks as a precaution against the coronavirus work at a fish market in Kochi, Kerala state, India, Thursday, April 22, 2021. India reported a global record of more than 314,000 new infections Thursday as a grim coronavirus surge in the world's second-most populous country sends more and more sick people into a fragile health care system critically short of hospital beds



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People wearing masks as a precaution against the coronavirus ride on a public transport bus past a fish market in Kochi, Kerala state, India, Thursday, April 22, 2021. (AP Photo/R S Iyer)



Chairs that were used for an open air meeting lie stacked beneath a roadside tree in Kochi, Kerala state, India, Thursday, April 22, 2021. The government has revised the guidelines on public gatherings following the spike in coronavirus cases. (AP Photo/R S Iyer)

The Health Ministry said that of the country's total production of 7,500 metric tonnes (8,300 U.S. tons) of oxygen per day, 6,600 metric tonnes (7,275 U.S. tons) were being allocated for medical use.

It also said that 75 railroad coaches in the Indian capital have been turned into hospitals providing an additional 1,200 beds for COVID-19 patients.

The Times of India newspaper says that the previous highest daily case count of 307,581 was reported in the U.S. on Jan. 8.

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