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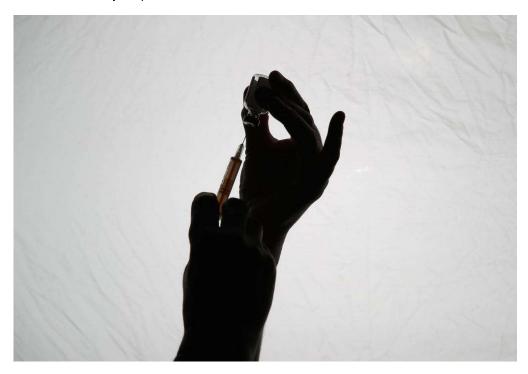
### HEALTH

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### **COVID-19 vaccines: India needs to rise**

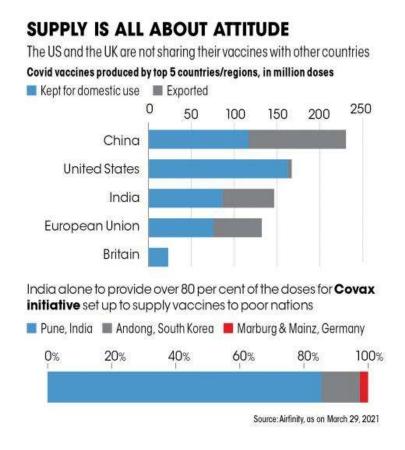
India has to work hard to defend its position as the global hub of vaccine production

By Vibha Varshney (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/vibha-varshney-50) Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



Most of the vaccines for the novel coronavirus disease through March 2021 were manufactured in China, followed by the United States, India, the European Union and the United Kingdom.

The US and UK have kept all their vaccines for domestic consumption. EU countries are sharing within themselves. Call it a tactic to forge diplomatic relations or plain empathy, at present, China and India are the only countries exporting almost half their vaccines to others, mostly those in the developing and underdeveloped world.



Till the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world, India was the world leader in vaccine production. Its pharmaceutical companies used to churn out 60 per cent of the vaccines required for the global immunisation programmes.

"In part, this has been possible because in recent years, the country has excelled at providing high-quality medicines at low prices by utilising the economies of scale, and the work of many very innovative companies such as sii who have found ways to produce products at lower cost than

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In terms of COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, the country has now lost the supremacy to China and the US. Yet, it seems to be in a good place.

"Under the Vaccine Maitri initiative, India has provided 60 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 70 countries including the UK, Brazil, Morocco and Bangladesh," said Sudarshan Jain, secretary-general of Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance that represents 24 Indian pharmaceuticals companies. The country's vaccine export efforts have helped strengthen external relationships with neighbours in South Asia, he added.

India, in fact, is faring better than China in diplomacy. In May 2020, just a month before rolling out its COVID-19 vaccine Convidecia, the first in the world, China had announced that it was for "global public good". Since then China has shipped vaccines to 35 countries, but has used it as a business opportunity, wrote Ivana Karásková and Veronika Blablová, researchers at Association for International Affairs in Prague in an article published March 24.

There is some concern that China does not treat its customers equally. "Some countries received vaccines in the form of donations, while others purchased them or were offered a loan to buy them — an alternative aimed primarily at the Latin American and Caribbean countries," Karásková and Blablová said.

India was quick when China failed to deliver 300,000 doses to Myanmar, and supplied 1.7 million instead. In Nepal, both China and India offered vaccines, but only India provided additional vaccines. Bangladesh also opted for Indian vaccines after it refused to co-fund Chinese vaccine trials.

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India has another advantage: Since it has been providing a major chunk of the vaccines needed for immunisation programmes across the world, the quality of its supplies is established. Compared to this, China is secretive about scrutiny and quality is doubtful. "China is out of fashion politically too," said S Srinivasan, managing trustee of locost, a generic drug company.

As a result, several multinationals are interested in manufacturing their vaccines in India. Russia is already in talks with at least five Indian companies to manufacture 850 million doses of Sputnik V vaccine by 2021. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories has carried out clinical trials for Sputnik V and has applied for an emergency use authorisation (EUA) licence in India.

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"There are several prominent Indian companies such as Zydus Cadilla, Gennova (Emcure Pharma) and Wockhardt Ltd that are working towards entering the covid vaccine market," said Mahesh Doshi, president of the Indian Drug Manufacturers' Association.

These deals could increase the country's vaccine manufacturing capacity substantially in the coming days, helping India regain its position.

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# Kumbh amid COVID-19: 1.3 million bathe at Haridwar as COVID-19 cases spike

Officials at Kumbh Mela report decrease in number of pilgrims at second royal bath even as COVID-19 cases surge

By Vivek Mishra (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/vivek-mishra-133692) Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



Pilgrims take a dip in the Ganga on the second royal bath. Photo: Midhun Vijayan / CSE

Some 1,351,631 pilgrims bathed in the waters of the Ganga at Haridwar during the second *Shahi Snan* or 'royal bath' April 14, 2021 even as novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases surged at the Kumbh Mela.

Basic rules like social distancing and the wearing of masks continued to be violated April 14 like at the previous royal bath April 12.

The administration, though, was busy with the bathing management of the *akhadas* or religious sects. Mela officer Deepak Rawat called the second bath a success.

More than 3.1 million devotees had bathed in the Ganga April 12. Officials ascribed the drop in the number of pilgrims within two days to increasing COVID-19 restrictions in various states due to which many could not reach Haridwar.

However, the police told *Down To Earth* that on April 13, more than 0.35 million pilgrims had reached the fair area. This was the highest number of pilgrims arriving since April 10.

Some 0.15 million people had arrived at the river by noon April 12. On April 11, the number was 95,000 and on 10 April, the number was up to 40,000.

But despite the fall in the number of pilgrims April 14, the graph of COVID-19 cases in Haridwar is surging. According to Chief Medical Officer SK Jha, COVID-19 infection is spreading in the city at the rate of 0.6 per cent. He said RT-PCR tests were not possible though antigen tests were being conducted.

There is also confusion about the actual number of COVID-19 positive cases. Jha said while the number was less according to the antigen tests, it was high according to the few RT-PCR tests that had been conducted.

Some 36,243 tests had been conducted by 5 pm April 14, of which 154 were found to be positive. Of these, 2,000 were RT-PCR tests, the results of which will come by 12 midnight.

On April 13, 2021, 50,638 tests were carried out, in which 496 infections were detected:

- 45,285 antigen tests were performed, that gave 163 positive results
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Odisha, which last recorded 2,000 COVID-19 cases in October last year, again sees spike

By Ashis Senapati (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/ashis-senapati-2149) Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



Passengers being screened for COVID-19 at the Bhubaneswar Railway Station. Photo: Ashis Senapati

Odisha recorded a single-day spike of 2,267 new positive cases of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) till midnight of April 13, 2021, government officials said April 14.

Some 1,314 of the newly infected patients are in quarantine. Around 953 of the patients have contacted the disease locally. The total number of positive cases in Odisha now stands at 355,353, according to the government.

Three patients succumbed to COVID-19 in Odisha in the last 24 hours, taking the toll to 1,933, Bijay Panigrahi, the director of the health and family welfare department, Government of Odisha, said.

Odisha had last hit the 2,000-mark October 17, 2020 when 2019 people had tested positive for the virus —Some 851 of the patients had contacted the disease locally.

This time, Sundargarh district, bordering Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, has topped the list with 458 cases, followed by Khordha (348), Sambalpur (120), Bargarh (120), Cuttack (117), Nuapada (104) and Nabarangpur (104).

Odisha has so far tested a total of 9,461,720 samples including 33,251 April 13, 2021. The state's positivity rate stands at 3.74 per cent, added Panigrahi.

Ajit Mangaraj, a candidate from the Congress, who was contesting a by-election for the Pipili assembly segment, passed away April 14 while undergoing treatment for COVID-19 at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar three days ahead of the poll.

An additional 300-bed COVID-19 hospital will be set up at the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Burla of Sambalpur district. It will constitute 250 general beds with oxygen facilities and 50 intensive care units. It will be ready within 10 days, Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, Odisha's chief secretary said April 14.

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They are allowed to enter only if they test negative. Otherwise, they are immediately admitted to the hospital. Patrolling has been intensified on all inter-state borders, he added. The health department has halted all elective surgeries in the government and private hospitals of the state. We have also suspended central registration for the time being. Manual registration will be taken up with proper social distancing measures in each out-patient department to avoid large gatherings at the central registration counter. The state government has also imposed restrictions on patients and attendants in hospitals to decongest unnecessary crowds, added Mohapatra.

The district administrations of Ganjam and Jagatsinghpur imposed Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure as a precautionary measure on the Odia New Year Day April 14 to restrain people from visiting temples and other religious places in large numbers. The restriction prohibits the assembly of four or more persons in an area.



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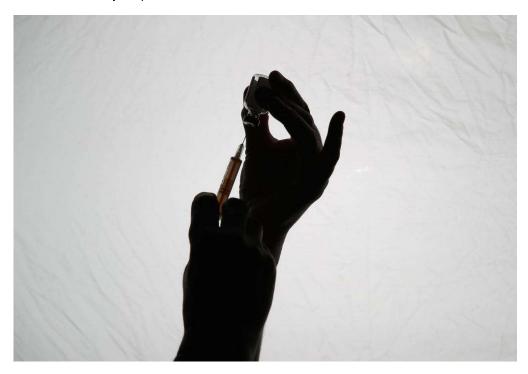
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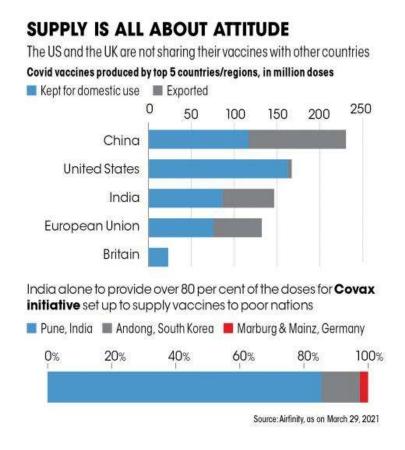
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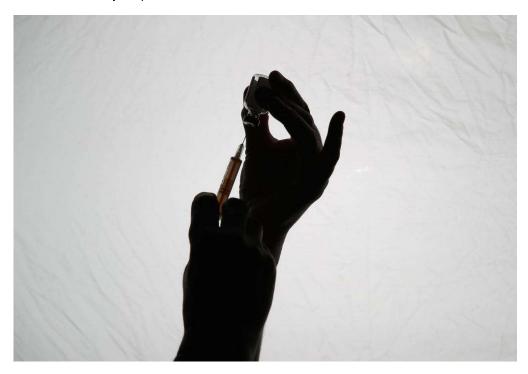
### HEALTH

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### **COVID-19 vaccines: India needs to rise**

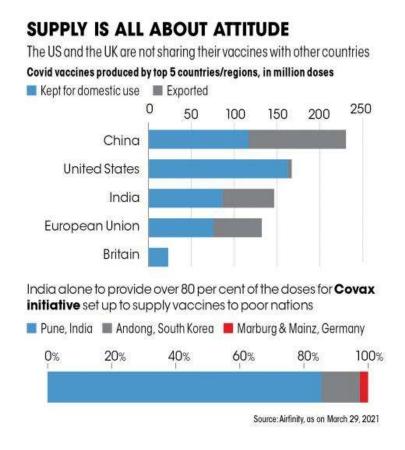
India has to work hard to defend its position as the global hub of vaccine production

By Vibha Varshney (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/vibha-varshney-50) Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



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By Vivek Mishra (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/vivek-mishra-133692) Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



Pilgrims take a dip in the Ganga on the second royal bath. Photo: Midhun Vijayan / CSE

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Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



Passengers being screened for COVID-19 at the Bhubaneswar Railway Station. Photo: Ashis Senapati

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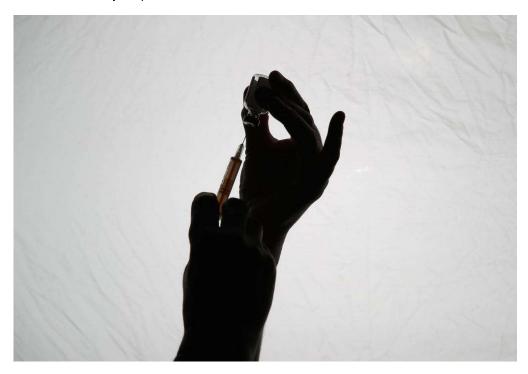
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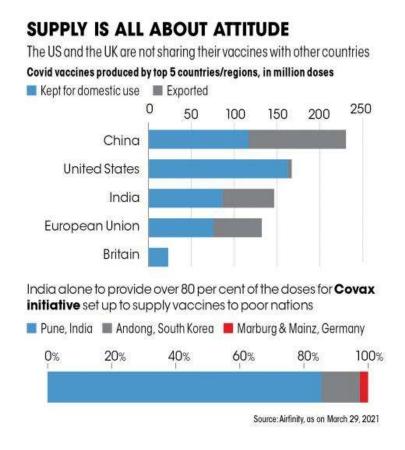
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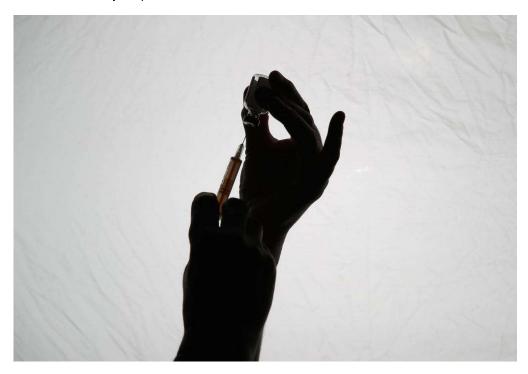
### HEALTH

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### **COVID-19 vaccines: India needs to rise**

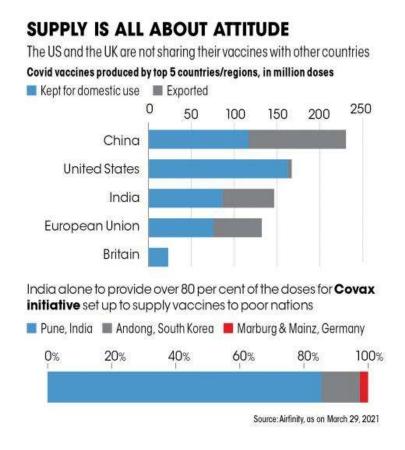
India has to work hard to defend its position as the global hub of vaccine production

By Vibha Varshney (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/vibha-varshney-50) Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



Most of the vaccines for the novel coronavirus disease through March 2021 were manufactured in China, followed by the United States, India, the European Union and the United Kingdom.

The US and UK have kept all their vaccines for domestic consumption. EU countries are sharing within themselves. Call it a tactic to forge diplomatic relations or plain empathy, at present, China and India are the only countries exporting almost half their vaccines to others, mostly those in the developing and underdeveloped world.



Till the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world, India was the world leader in vaccine production. Its pharmaceutical companies used to churn out 60 per cent of the vaccines required for the global immunisation programmes.

"In part, this has been possible because in recent years, the country has excelled at providing high-quality medicines at low prices by utilising the economies of scale, and the work of many very innovative companies such as sii who have found ways to produce products at lower cost than

elsewhere," said Anthony Mc Donnell, senior policy analyst, global health, Center for Global Development in Europe.

In terms of COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, the country has now lost the supremacy to China and the US. Yet, it seems to be in a good place.

"Under the Vaccine Maitri initiative, India has provided 60 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 70 countries including the UK, Brazil, Morocco and Bangladesh," said Sudarshan Jain, secretary-general of Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance that represents 24 Indian pharmaceuticals companies. The country's vaccine export efforts have helped strengthen external relationships with neighbours in South Asia, he added.

India, in fact, is faring better than China in diplomacy. In May 2020, just a month before rolling out its COVID-19 vaccine Convidecia, the first in the world, China had announced that it was for "global public good". Since then China has shipped vaccines to 35 countries, but has used it as a business opportunity, wrote Ivana Karásková and Veronika Blablová, researchers at Association for International Affairs in Prague in an article published March 24.

There is some concern that China does not treat its customers equally. "Some countries received vaccines in the form of donations, while others purchased them or were offered a loan to buy them — an alternative aimed primarily at the Latin American and Caribbean countries," Karásková and Blablová said.

India was quick when China failed to deliver 300,000 doses to Myanmar, and supplied 1.7 million instead. In Nepal, both China and India offered vaccines, but only India provided additional vaccines. Bangladesh also opted for Indian vaccines after it refused to co-fund Chinese vaccine trials.

India promptly delivered a batch of COVID-19 vaccines to Brazil after its president Jair Bolsonaro rejected a deal of 46 million doses being developed by a Chinese company, saying that the "Brazilian people will not be anyone's guinea pig". India is also the major supplier to COVAX, a global initiative aimed at equitable access to covid-19 vaccines led by UNICEF, Gavi (The Vaccine Alliance) thw World Health Organization, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and others. The country provides more than 80 per cent of doses for the initiative, which particularly aims to supply vaccines to poor countries.

India has another advantage: Since it has been providing a major chunk of the vaccines needed for immunisation programmes across the world, the quality of its supplies is established. Compared to this, China is secretive about scrutiny and quality is doubtful. "China is out of fashion politically too," said S Srinivasan, managing trustee of locost, a generic drug company.

As a result, several multinationals are interested in manufacturing their vaccines in India. Russia is already in talks with at least five Indian companies to manufacture 850 million doses of Sputnik V vaccine by 2021. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories has carried out clinical trials for Sputnik V and has applied for an emergency use authorisation (EUA) licence in India.

On March 12, the US International Development Finance Corporation, the country's development bank, announced it will help Hyderabad-based firm Biological E manufacture 1 billion doses of covid-19 vaccines by 2022. This portfolio is likely to include Ad26.cov2.s vaccine by Johnson & Johnson, which is already approved in 37 countries.

"There are several prominent Indian companies such as Zydus Cadilla, Gennova (Emcure Pharma) and Wockhardt Ltd that are working towards entering the covid vaccine market," said Mahesh Doshi, president of the Indian Drug Manufacturers' Association.

These deals could increase the country's vaccine manufacturing capacity substantially in the coming days, helping India regain its position.

### HEALTH

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# Kumbh amid COVID-19: 1.3 million bathe at Haridwar as COVID-19 cases spike

Officials at Kumbh Mela report decrease in number of pilgrims at second royal bath even as COVID-19 cases surge

By Vivek Mishra (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/vivek-mishra-133692) Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



Pilgrims take a dip in the Ganga on the second royal bath. Photo: Midhun Vijayan / CSE

Some 1,351,631 pilgrims bathed in the waters of the Ganga at Haridwar during the second *Shahi Snan* or 'royal bath' April 14, 2021 even as novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases surged at the Kumbh Mela.

Basic rules like social distancing and the wearing of masks continued to be violated April 14 like at the previous royal bath April 12.

The administration, though, was busy with the bathing management of the *akhadas* or religious sects. Mela officer Deepak Rawat called the second bath a success.

More than 3.1 million devotees had bathed in the Ganga April 12. Officials ascribed the drop in the number of pilgrims within two days to increasing COVID-19 restrictions in various states due to which many could not reach Haridwar.

However, the police told *Down To Earth* that on April 13, more than 0.35 million pilgrims had reached the fair area. This was the highest number of pilgrims arriving since April 10.

Some 0.15 million people had arrived at the river by noon April 12. On April 11, the number was 95,000 and on 10 April, the number was up to 40,000.

But despite the fall in the number of pilgrims April 14, the graph of COVID-19 cases in Haridwar is surging. According to Chief Medical Officer SK Jha, COVID-19 infection is spreading in the city at the rate of 0.6 per cent. He said RT-PCR tests were not possible though antigen tests were being conducted.

There is also confusion about the actual number of COVID-19 positive cases. Jha said while the number was less according to the antigen tests, it was high according to the few RT-PCR tests that had been conducted.

Some 36,243 tests had been conducted by 5 pm April 14, of which 154 were found to be positive. Of these, 2,000 were RT-PCR tests, the results of which will come by 12 midnight.

On April 13, 2021, 50,638 tests were carried out, in which 496 infections were detected:

- 45,285 antigen tests were performed, that gave 163 positive results
- 5,353 RT-PCR tests were conducted, that gave 333 positive results

On April 12, 2021, 66,203 tests were carried out, in which 387 infections were detected:

- 61,810 antigen tests were performed, that gave 171 positive results
- 4,393 RT-PCRs tests were conducted, that gave 215 positive results

On April 11, 2021, 55,430 tests were carried out, in which 369 infections were detected:

- 49,929 antigen tests were performed, that gave 98 positive results
- 5,501 RT-PCR tests were conducted, that gave 271 positive results

On April 10, 2021, 30,638 tests were carried out, in which 205 infections were detected:

- 22,610 antigen tests were performed, that gave 54 positive results
- 8,028 RT-PCT tests were conducted, that gave 151 positive results

### HEALTH

(https://www.downtoearth.org.in/health)

# Odisha records single-day spike of 2,267 new COVID-19 cases on April 13

Odisha, which last recorded 2,000 COVID-19 cases in October last year, again sees spike

By Ashis Senapati (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/ashis-senapati-2149)
Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



Passengers being screened for COVID-19 at the Bhubaneswar Railway Station. Photo: Ashis Senapati

Odisha recorded a single-day spike of 2,267 new positive cases of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) till midnight of April 13, 2021, government officials said April 14.

Some 1,314 of the newly infected patients are in quarantine. Around 953 of the patients have contacted the disease locally. The total number of positive cases in Odisha now stands at 355,353, according to the government.

Three patients succumbed to COVID-19 in Odisha in the last 24 hours, taking the toll to 1,933, Bijay Panigrahi, the director of the health and family welfare department, Government of Odisha, said.

Odisha had last hit the 2,000-mark October 17, 2020 when 2019 people had tested positive for the virus —Some 851 of the patients had contacted the disease locally.

This time, Sundargarh district, bordering Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, has topped the list with 458 cases, followed by Khordha (348), Sambalpur (120), Bargarh (120), Cuttack (117), Nuapada (104) and Nabarangpur (104).

Odisha has so far tested a total of 9,461,720 samples including 33,251 April 13, 2021. The state's positivity rate stands at 3.74 per cent, added Panigrahi.

Ajit Mangaraj, a candidate from the Congress, who was contesting a by-election for the Pipili assembly segment, passed away April 14 while undergoing treatment for COVID-19 at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar three days ahead of the poll.

An additional 300-bed COVID-19 hospital will be set up at the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Burla of Sambalpur district. It will constitute 250 general beds with oxygen facilities and 50 intensive care units. It will be ready within 10 days, Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, Odisha's chief secretary said April 14.

All vehicles coming to Odisha from West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh are being inspected and their occupants tested for COVID-19, Mohapatra said.

They are allowed to enter only if they test negative. Otherwise, they are immediately admitted to the hospital. Patrolling has been intensified on all inter-state borders, he added. The health department has halted all elective surgeries in the government and private hospitals of the state. We have also suspended central registration for the time being. Manual registration will be taken up with proper social distancing measures in each out-patient department to avoid large gatherings at the central registration counter. The state government has also imposed restrictions on patients and attendants in hospitals to decongest unnecessary crowds, added Mohapatra.

The district administrations of Ganjam and Jagatsinghpur imposed Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure as a precautionary measure on the Odia New Year Day April 14 to restrain people from visiting temples and other religious places in large numbers. The restriction prohibits the assembly of four or more persons in an area.



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