

Indonesia seeks more oxygen for COVID-19 sick amid shortage

July 5 2021, by Edna Tarigan and Slamet Riyadi



A teenager reacts as she receives a shot of the Sinovac vaccine for COVID-19 during a vaccination campaign at a school in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia on Monday, July 5, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati

Parts of Indonesia lack oxygen supplies as the number of critically ill

COVID-19 patients who need it increases, the nation's pandemic response leader said Monday, after dozens of sick people died at a public hospital that ran out of its central supply.

"Due to an increase of three to four times in the amount (of oxygen) needed, the distribution has been hampered," said Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the coordinating maritime affairs and investment minister.

The government is asking oxygen producers to dedicate their full supply to medical needs and will import it if needed, Pandjaitan said at a virtual news conference.

The statement comes after Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikit said the government guaranteed oxygen supply for COVID-19 patients on June 25.

At least 63 COVID-19 patients have died during treatment at Dr. Sardjito General Hospital in Yogyakarta city since Saturday—33 of them during the outage of its central liquid oxygen supply even though the hospital switched to using oxygen cylinders during that period, hospital spokesman Banu Hermawan said.

"Their deteriorating condition contributed the most to their deaths," Hermawan said.

The hospital's central oxygen supply was operational again at 4:45 a.m. Sunday after 15 tons of liquid oxygen were delivered. Medical oxygen comes in liquid and compressed forms.



A medical worker wheels an oxygen tank to be used to treat patients at an emergency tent erected to accommodate a surge in COVID-19 cases, at Dr. Sardjito Central Hospital in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Sunday, July 4, 2021. A number of COVID-19 patients died amid an oxygen shortage at the hospital on the main island of Java following a nationwide surge of coronavirus infections. Credit: AP Photo/Kalandra

Yogyakarta Gov. Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X said hospitals need more oxygen than before because of the increasing number of COVID-19 patients in the province.

"We need more oxygen supply. But it does not mean there is no supply at all," he said.

Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin told a parliamentary commission overseeing health issues on Monday that his ministry has set up a special unit to deal with oxygen supplies in hospitals amid a dramatic spike in cases on Java and Bali islands.

"We have identified oxygen needs in each hospital, and set up oxygen task forces in each province," Sadikin said in a virtual hearing with the lawmakers.

He said his ministry has asked the Industry Ministry to convert oxygen that was previously allocated to industry to hospital use.

Indonesia, the world's fourth-most populous country, has seen a rapid surge in COVID-19 cases in the last two weeks. The Health Ministry recorded 29,745 new cases with 558 deaths from the virus on Monday. The country has recorded more than 2,313,000 cases, including 61,140 deaths.



Medical workers wheel oxygen tanks at Dr. Sardjito Central Hospital in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Sunday, July 4, 2021. A number of COVID-19 patients died amid an oxygen shortage at the hospital on the main island of Java following a nationwide surge of coronavirus infections. Credit: AP Photo/Kalandra



Teenagers receive a shot of the Sinovac vaccine for COVID-19 during a vaccination campaign at a school in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia on Monday, July 5, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati



Teenagers wait to receive a shot of the Sinovac vaccine for COVID-19 during a vaccination campaign at a school in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia on Monday, July 5, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati



Indonesian soldiers guard and officials stand near an army armored vehicle at a check point during the imposition of an emergency restriction to curb the spread of coronavirus outbreak in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, July 5, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim



A teenager receives a shot of the Sinovac vaccine for COVID-19 during a vaccination campaign at a school in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia on Monday, July 5, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati



Indonesian soldiers guard at a check point during the imposition of an emergency restriction to curb the spread of coronavirus outbreak in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, July 5, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim



A teenager reacts as she receives a shot of the Sinovac vaccine for COVID-19 during a vaccination campaign at a school in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia on Monday, July 5, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati



An Indonesian Army armored vehicle is parked at a check point during the imposition of an emergency restriction to curb the spread of coronavirus outbreak in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, July 5, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim



Indonesian soldiers guard near an army armored vehicle at a check point during the imposition of an emergency restriction to curb the spread of coronavirus outbreak in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, July 5, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim



A man stands near an Indonesian Army armored vehicle parked at a check point, to see the situation during the imposition of an emergency restriction to curb the spread of coronavirus outbreak in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, July 5, 2021.

Credit: AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim

Pandjaitan said the incubation period means the number of infected people will continue to increase through mid-July.

"It can increase again in the future if we cannot be disciplined," he said.

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