

Coronavirus pandemic

8-year-old girl among 2 imported cases; 1 new infection in community

Ng Keng Gene

An eight-year-old American girl was among two imported coronavirus patients announced by the Ministry of Health yesterday.

The dependant's pass holder tested positive on Monday.

The other imported patient, a 39-year-old male work pass holder, tested positive on Sunday. He is an Indian national employed here.

The two, who had arrived in Singapore from India on July 12 and 13, were asymptomatic when tested, said the ministry.

They had been placed on a 14-day stay-home notice upon arrival in Singapore, and had been tested while serving their notice.

The sole community case announced yesterday, a 29-year-old work pass holder, tested positive on Monday.

The Indian national was identified as a contact of a previously confirmed case, and had been quarantined earlier.

He was tested during his quarantine period even though he was asymptomatic.

Migrant workers staying in dormitories made up the remaining 356

The average number of new daily cases in the community in a week has also decreased from 10 cases two weeks ago to four in the past week. The number of unlinked cases in the community in a week has decreased from a daily average of five cases to two over the same period.

of the 359 new coronavirus cases announced yesterday, taking Singapore's total to 51,197.

No new Covid-19 clusters were announced.

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The number of unlinked cases in the community in a week has decreased from a daily average of five cases to two over the same period.

With 201 cases discharged yesterday, 45,878 patients have fully recovered from the disease.

A total of 185 patients remain in hospital, while 5,092 are recuperating in community facilities. None is in intensive care.

Singapore has had 27 deaths from Covid-19 complications, while 15 who tested positive have died of other causes.

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Update on cases

New cases: 359

Imported: 2 (1 work pass holder, 1 dependant's pass holder)

In community: 1 (1 work pass holder)

In dormitories: 356

Active cases: 5,277

In hospitals: 185 (0 in ICU)

In community facilities: 5,092

Deaths: 27

Patients with Covid-19 who died of other causes: 15

Total discharged: 45,878

Discharged yesterday: 201

TOTAL CASES: 51,197

More local tour offerings as group limit doubled to 10

They can also run for up to 8 hours instead of 2, offering relief to operators struggling to survive tourist drought

Tiffany Fumiko Tay

Jaunts to Singapore's Southern Islands and virtual tours for overseas viewers are among the offerings local tour operators have in the works to survive the tourist drought.

The operators were given some relief yesterday when the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) announced that walking, cycling and kayaking tours may now accommodate up to 10 participants, double the previous limit.

As five remains the current limit for public gatherings, however, groups that exceed this must be split into two, with no intermingling allowed, according to updated guidelines for tour operators.

Tours may also now run for a maximum of eight hours, up from two previously.

These allowances come amid a newly launched campaign to encourage locals to prop up tourism businesses, as well as low numbers of Covid-19 community cases.

Tour operators and tourist guides have been allowed to resume operations from this month, subject to approval from the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

The STB told The Straits Times that it has received 47 applications so far, of which 36 have obtained approval to go ahead with their submitted tour itineraries and schedules.

"While the updated guidelines allow for increased group size and longer tours, tour operators must still comply with all prevailing safe management measures," the STB said.

The tourism board, together with Enterprise Singapore and Sentosa Development Corporation, launched a \$45 million campaign last week to drive local spending at eateries, shops and leisure attractions, which have been hit hard.

Tour operators that The Straits Times spoke to said they have seen a healthy number of bookings over the last two weeks, though not enough to turn a profit.

Mr Stanley Foo, co-founder of Oriental Travel and Tours, said the firm is focusing on its Creepy Tales Of Singapore night tour for now as it had proven popular among locals even before the pandemic hit.

The operator is also developing other offerings for the local market, such as trips to Pulau Ubin and the Southern Islands.

While he expects at least 40 to 50 local bookings this month – twice the usual number – that is not enough to sustain business in the long term, he said.

"Right now, it is just about hanging in there and creating jobs for our guides and transport operators rather than making money."

Mr Foo noted that the relaxed rules on group size will help with cost savings, though the extension



A guide from Monster Day Tours leading a tour of Jewel Changi Airport. It is one of the company's SG55 tours – so branded in line with the Singapore focus and National Day celebrations – targeting locals during the tourist drought. PHOTO: LIANHE ZHAOBAO

of tour duration limit from two to eight hours is a bigger relief.

Mr Suen Tat Yam, founder of Monster Day Tours, said he has received about eight bookings for the coming long weekend.

The firm's walking tours of precincts like Little India and Kampong Glam have been branded as SG55 tours, in line with the local focus and National Day celebrations.

The company has also recently launched virtual tours, a product that it expects to have mileage beyond the current travel restrictions.

"Virtual tours have the advantage of being able to reach out to people

overseas, and corporate events are all on hold," Mr Suen noted.

For \$10, participants can book a time slot for a tour of the one-north area, marketed as Singapore's Silicon Valley. During the live streaming, they can ask the guide questions and participate in quizzes and other activities.

"We didn't want to develop a product just for the current situation. More people are now open to the idea of virtual tours... so we think that even after Covid, it can still be a good product."

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SAFETY FIRST

While the updated guidelines allow for increased group size and longer tours, tour operators must still comply with all prevailing safe management measures.



SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD

Central command system gives TTSH, NCID a bird's eye view of ops

Timothy Goh

On Feb 4, Singapore saw its first locally transmitted case of Covid-19, and the definition of suspect cases was changed.

Within a day, a surge of nearly 500 people – almost double the usual number – began showing up at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases' (NCID) screening centre, posing a risk of overcrowding.

But instead of being overwhelmed, the centre was able to quickly open another hundred beds for patients and safely manage the crowd flow, thanks to a newly launched command, control and communications (C3) system at the nearby Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH).

The system won the Excellence Champion Medal at this year's National Healthcare Innovation and Productivity awards by the Ministry of Health.

Dr Jamie Mervyn Lim, chief operating officer of TTSH and Central

Health, told reporters on Monday that up till 2008, TTSH had relied on a "pen, paper and phone" system of managing its operations, with each department doing its own thing.

"It was very inefficient, we weren't able to optimise the process because there was no visibility about where empty beds were, who was discharged, and so on," he said.

But following the successful use of technology such as radio frequency identification chips and computer algorithms in the hospital in the following years, the decision was made in 2015 to try leveraging technology further to support decision-making and enhance the hospital's workflows.

So, the C3 system was launched in December last year. Located in the TTSH Operations Command Centre, it serves as the "brain" to both TTSH and NCID, helping to control the flow of resources across both institutions, which share the same pool of manpower.



Tan Tock Seng Hospital's command, control and communications system at its operations command centre helps control the flow of resources across the hospital and the National Centre for Infectious Diseases. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

The system gives a team of about a dozen staff in the centre a bird's eye view of everything that is going on in TTSH and NCID – from crowds forming at potential choke-points to which rooms are about to

be vacated so that housekeeping staff can quickly prepare them for the next patient.

"There is a lot of back-end coordination, and the (C3 system) provides that level of visibility of where

the different resources are, who we can activate and how quickly, and lets us deploy them," said Dr Lim.

The C3 system, which was co-developed by TTSH, Integrated Health Information Systems and ST Engineering, and supported by the Health Ministry, also comes with multiple pre-planned scenario modes which allow it to adapt to various real-life situations, such as a civil emergency, an infectious disease outbreak or a fire in the hospital.

Dr Lim said the system has helped TTSH and NCID deal with the difficulties posed by the Covid-19 outbreak.

"When you go into outbreak mode, you are going into an unknown... We needed more data points," he said.

Using devices known as real-time location trackers, the C3 system helps provide data about staff and patient movement, allowing the institutions to track who Covid-19 patients may have come into contact with.

It also keeps track of how many gloves and masks have been used each day, which enables the institutions to anticipate and plug any shortages long before they arise.

The system also helps to quickly assign the best beds to patients, sorting quickly through around 300 considerations such as gender, ward class preference and illness – something that had to be done manually in the past.

Dr Lim said the system is continually being adapted and upgraded, with the eventual aim of linking it to other partners in the healthcare network, such as community hospitals, ambulance service providers, polyclinics and other public hospitals.

"No two outbreaks are the same, and we co-developed the outbreak module as Covid-19 evolves.

"We learnt along the way, and we have to be nimble enough to adapt with each step of the journey," he said.

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