

# 3 injured in slashing at Pasir Ris West Plaza; man, 61, arrested

Andrew Wong and Wong Shiying

Three people were injured in a slashing incident at a mall in Pasir Ris Street 72, with shoppers and business owners running for cover amid the chaos.

The incident happened on Dec 20 at around 4pm at Pasir Ris West Plaza.

A Pasir Ris resident, who was at the mall just after the attack, said the victims were from Royal Regent, a provision shop selling a variety of items such as phone products, sandals and bags.

"They were covered in blood, and there were over 30 police officers at the scene, including several armed with rifles," said the resident, who declined to be named.

Another resident, who gave his name as Mr Lee, said the victims are the owners of the provision shop, which has been at the mall for about 20 years.

"They were very heavily bandaged, and the injuries looked very bad," added the taxi driver.

The assailant was known to the victims, and police said their preliminary investigations showed that the individuals were not on friendly terms.

The victims – a 53-year-old man and two women, aged 53 and 55 – were conscious when taken to hospital.

"A 61-year-old man was conveyed semi-conscious to the hospital and was subsequently arrested for voluntarily causing grievous hurt with a dangerous weapon," said the police, who were alerted to the incident at about 4.50pm.

The Singapore Civil Defence Force said the four individuals were taken to Sengkang General Hospital.

The Straits Times understands that the two women are sisters. A frequent patron of the shop spoke to the mother of the two women.

Said the patron: "The mother said her daughters, though in-

## ONGOING DISPUTE

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**SENIOR MINISTER AND COORDINATING MINISTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY TEO CHEE HEAN.** He said the suspect is believed to have acted alone, adding that the incident was not random.

jured, fought off the assailant until he collapsed outside the shop."

The assailant is believed to be working at a mobile phone shop in Pasir Ris.

In a Facebook post, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Teo Chee Hean said the suspect is believed to have acted alone, adding that the incident was not random.

"It is believed that it may be related to an ongoing dispute between the parties involved in the incident," said SM Teo, who is an MP for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC.

He added that the four injured persons were in stable condition.

When ST visited the mall at 6.30pm, the police were still at the scene interviewing witnesses. A cordon had been set up around the shop, where socks and shoes were strewn on the floor, with some items covered in blood.

An employee working in a pharmacy two shops down said she heard a woman scream at around 4pm.

The employee, who declined to be named, said she recognised the voice behind the scream as that of the woman who works in the sundry shop tucked between the pharmacy and the provision shop.

The employee said she ran, fear-



The incident occurred on Dec 20 at around 4pm. A cordon was set up around Royal Regent (above), said to be owned by the victims. ST PHOTOS: ARIFFIN JAMAR



(Right) A police officer studying items laid out on the floor near the Royal Regent provision shop.



(Left) A bandaged person being attended to at the scene of the incident. Four people, including the assailant, were taken to hospital. PHOTO: ST READER

ing for her safety, and did not see the attacker.

According to passers-by, the provision shop also provides mobile phone services, including sales and repairs.

A plainclothes police officer was seen speaking to a man, who other

business owners identified as an employee of the shop. His hands were smeared with what appeared to be dried blood.

In 2022, the Ministry of Home Affairs sought to reassure the public following a number of violent incidents that year involving a

bladed weapon.

The ministry said that for urgent incidents, including those involving dangerous weapons, the police are generally able to respond within 15 minutes of the call.

Between 2017 and 2021, there were about 150 knife-related

crimes annually involving murder, robbery, rioting and serious hurt.

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Additional reporting by Christine Tan

# I have Covid-19, but can my family party go on if I stay in my room?

Do not attend a function if infected, but if you have to go, act responsibly, say experts

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It's the end of the year and with Christmas and New Year just around the corner, it's party time for many people. But Covid-19 infections have soared in December. The Straits Times asked experts if merrymakers should let the virus spoil their fun.

**Q I've been invited to a party. I have tested positive for Covid-19, but don't feel very sick. Should I go?**

**A** Associate Professor Alex Cook from the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health said: "Please don't, unless you have enemies at the party. Only joking, don't go, even if you have enemies there.

"It's just irresponsible to mingle with people when you know you are infected. Wait until you're better and use that as an excuse for another party. If you absolutely must go, then wear a mask, keep good hygiene, and try to avoid having too much contact with others."

Professor Dale Fisher from the National University Hospital said: "There are several factors to consider: How important is the party – for example, is it a wedding? What is your role? Who are the other attendees – for example, are there many old folk? What day of illness is it? You are most infective early in the disease and a lot safer by day five. Can you wear a mask and distance yourself – for example, eat at your own table? Life has to go on, so I would not say a definite no."

Professor Paul Tambyah, president of the International Society for Infectious Diseases, said: "If everyone else at the party recently recovered from Covid-19, that would be a very safe place to go.

Otherwise, you would probably infect those who haven't recently been infected, especially in a crowded indoor bar! So stay home."

**Q My family is hosting a party at my house and I find out I have Covid-19 on the day of the party. Can the party go on if I stay in my room? Can I join in if I wear a mask?**

**A** Prof Cook said: "No matter what you do, there is a degree of risk in this scenario. The question is how much risk you and the guests can tolerate.

"Lowest risk: Cancel the party. Low risk: You avoid the party, your family moves it elsewhere. Even if you don't attend and your family moves the party to another venue, there's a risk that your family members are pre-symptomatic and would infect the guests.

"Moderate risk: You avoid the party, but you still hold it at your home. If so, try to give it a good clean (before the party). Higher risk: You attend the party but wear a mask. Highest risk: You attend the party and don't even wear a mask.

"If the guests are all young and healthy, more risk can be tolerated; but if it's your Ah Ma's 90th birthday party, obviously you need to be more risk-averse."

Dr Asok Kurup, an infectious diseases specialist in private practice, said: "Yes, but ensure good ventilation. Avoid using the air-con, open the windows, and switch on the fan for the guests.

"As to joining in with a mask – do it with full disclosure to your guests, provided they are all young and healthy. Do not share food and drinks."

Prof Tambyah said: "If you are symptomatic, you should stay away. According to current MOH



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(Ministry of Health) recommendations, if you are not symptomatic, you can 'return to normal activities'. I am not sure if a noisy party constitutes normal activities, but that would depend on your risk assessment.

"If you stay in your room, the party should go on, especially if it is your grandmother's 90th birthday! Although I am sure that your

aunties are not likely to believe that the virus cannot pass through closed doors and would insist on moving the venue away from your home."

**Q I had Covid-19 last month. Do I still need to get a booster jab?**

**A** Prof Tambyah said: "No. Most authorities recommend a wait of three to six months post-infection – especially as the current circulating strain JN.1 is quite antigenically distinct from the XBB.1.5 (used) in the currently available monovalent vaccines."

Prof Cook said: "You may not benefit from a booster so soon after being infected as your infection acts as a natural boost to your immunity."

Dr Kurup said: "No need. But if you are elderly or have specific risks, then you can receive it from

one to three months after recovering."

**Q I am young, in the age category of 20 to 60 years, and have no chronic medical conditions. Are three Covid-19 jabs enough, or do I need to get a booster annually?**

**A** Dr Shawn Vasoo, clinical director at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases, said: "While the Covid-19 vaccine booster is encouraged (for everyone), the average healthy 30-year-old who has completed three shots of the Covid-19 vaccination is certainly at a lower risk of severe disease than an older person.

"They may however consider vaccination if they have other medical risk factors putting them at higher risk – for example, chronic medical conditions – or if they reside with or care for those who

have these risk factors."

Prof Cook said: "It's like with flu vaccines – getting an annual booster will reduce the chance of you being ill or off work. But in this younger age range, you are not likely to wind up in hospital, so the need is less pressing than for the elderly. For what it's worth, I try to get a flu vaccine every year and that's my plan for Covid-19 going forward, and I'm in that age range."

Dr Kurup said: "If you are living or working with elderly and vulnerable persons who can be at risk of serious Covid-19-related illness, then you should get this update." Pregnancy, travel plans, and wanting to avoid work or study disruptions are other considerations, he added.

**Q Should people who can work from home do so more often until infection numbers fall? Should people wear masks when using public transport?**

**A** Dr Kurup said: "Where possible, yes, working from home can be considered, but does not need to be mandated. Yes, masking up in public transport is a right strategy to mitigate transmission. It's the holiday season and crowds are expected in many places."

Prof Tambyah said: "I think that many people would prefer working from home.

"As MOH points out, if you are Covid-19-positive, you should wear a mask if you are taking public transport. If you are vulnerable and concerned about infection, it would be reasonable to wear a comfortable mask. That might deter people from coming too close to you, although that is hard to do on the MRT during the rush hour."

Prof Fisher said: "I don't believe mask mandates are needed. It's a personal choice how much one wants to protect oneself. Obviously, if symptoms are present, you should stay home as much as possible – or see your doctor if you are worried – and always wear a mask if you must go out."

Prof Cook said: "Certainly, if you have any symptoms of a cough or cold, please wear a mask when in crowded places. If you are trying to avoid infection, you could wear a mask, yes, but you are still likely to be exposed at other settings such as the kopitiam or when meeting kakis. So the better protection is to ensure your vaccination is up to date."

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There is no need for a mask mandate right now, say experts. But if you show symptoms, stay at home, and always wear a mask if you must go out. ST PHOTO: GIN TAY