

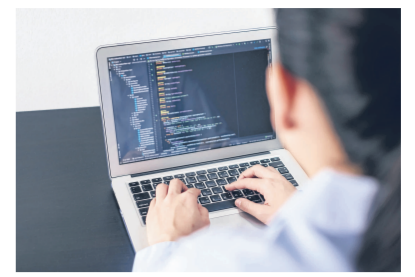
World • Taliban unveils new govt after fall of rebel stronghold |A10



The Big Story • Experts question giving booster jabs to younger adults |A4



Opinion • Will scammers derail Asean's digital drive? |A14



THE STRAITS TIMES

S'pore cannot rely solely on vaccines to fight Delta variant: NCID director

Linette Lai

When it comes to the Delta variant of Covid-19, one thing has become clear: Vaccination is not enough. This means Singapore cannot let up in its fight against the disease, said Professor Leo Yee Sin, executive director of the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID). "If I did 100 per cent in 2020, this year I have to do 200 per cent - because that is what the Delta variant demands of us," she told The Straits Times in an interview to commemorate the centre's second year of operations. "We cannot solely rely on vaccines."

Delta variant - which accounts for 99.6 per cent of the infections successfully sequenced by NCID between end-April and the end of last month - more contagious than its wild-type predecessor, Prof Leo said. First, infected people emit larger quantities of the virus. International studies have shown that the Delta strain can better attach to a person's upper respiratory tract, making it more easily transmitted to others. And it has a reduced incubation period of three to five days, meaning that it can be passed to others more quickly. If the outbreak is not properly controlled, Singapore could see an exponential surge in cases, Prof Leo added. "That is something that we have

NO COMPLACENCY continued on A2

Chinatown lights up for Mid-Autumn Festival



Chinatown is all decked out for the Mid-Autumn Festival, aglow with 900 lanterns and a towering centrepiece of Change, the Chinese goddess of the moon. The 12m-tall display opposite Chinatown Point shows Change soaring to a palace against the backdrop of a full moon. Lanterns shaped like mooncakes and jade rabbits line the other streets. The light-up will be on until Oct 5. The festival falls on Sept 21. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Firms with at least 10 staff must notify MOM of any retrenchment

This will enable tripartite partners, agencies to better reach out and support affected people

Sue-Ann Tan

Firms with at least 10 employees will have to notify the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) each time they retrench any staff from Nov 1, according to new requirements out yesterday. Currently, employers need to notify MOM only when they retrench five or more employees within a six-month period. Employers must also file the mandatory retrenchment notification within five working days after they serve the notice of retrenchment to an affected worker. MOM said: "The revised notification enables the tripartite partners, Workforce Singapore, the

Employment and Employability Institute as well as other agencies to better reach out to affected local employees to provide employment and job search support." Such support includes workshops, career coaching, job fairs, and job matching and referrals. Singapore's labour market in the second quarter of this year took a hit from the tightened rules to curb the spread of Covid-19 during phase two (heightened alert). Advance estimates by MOM show that retrenchments rose slightly to 2,500 in the April to June period, from 2,270 in the previous quarter. Senior Minister of State for Manpower Koh Poh Koon said: "One particular group of job seek-

ers that we are especially concerned about are people who have been retrenched. "So, part of the way to help them better is to go upstream, to be notified earlier of when they may be at risk of retrenchment, so that we can execute the measures that can help them to look for a new job." He added that this reduces the burden on employers of tracking the six-month period when they have to notify MOM. Dr Koh, who was visiting Workforce Singapore's Careers Connect office at Our Tampines Hub, said the latest move was also propelled by industry transformation. This affected workers even before the pandemic hit Singapore. "We have been seeing disruptive technologies causing quite a bit of technology transformation within different sectors... So, over time, we do see that companies are looking at restructuring their

workforce," he said. "Covid-19 has brought about sharper disruption to certain sectors, and therefore you do see some retrenchment activities happening in the past year." Maybank Kim Eng senior economist Chua Hak Bin said: "This requirement should better capture the swings in employment and help the Government to decide on any policy responses." He noted that the tapering of wage subsidies in the third quarter could pressure some firms and increase retrenchments, especially those in the food and beverage, retail and hospitality sectors. AYP Group managing director Jolin Nguyen said the move might also help to reduce the number of workers who could be faced with prolonged joblessness. "It will definitely benefit employees working for smaller companies as the Government can step

into to provide assistance," she said. National Trades Union Congress assistant secretary-general Patrick Tay added in a Facebook post: "Even though our economy is recovering, we understand that the recovery trajectory is not broad-based. This latest update will allow us to extend prompt support and assistance to affected workers, no matter the size of the retrenchment. "We urge companies to save jobs, protect the Singaporean core especially and retrench only as a last resort." Companies can notify MOM of retrenchments via its website. Penalties of up to \$2,000 can be imposed on employers who do not comply with this regulation. MOM added: "Employers should also ensure that they manage any retrenchment exercises responsibly and fairly." suetan@sph.com.sg

Green Mark • Higher bar for buildings

Changes to the Building and Construction Authority Green Mark scheme will require new and existing buildings to hit higher sustainability standards to be certified green, with the reduction of embodied carbon in developments among the criteria emphasised. The refreshed scheme places greater emphasis on the integration of smart technologies, the creation of healthier environments for building users and the reduction of embodied carbon in developments, National Development Minister Desmond Lee said yesterday.

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VACCINATION SG

Seniors aged 60 and above can walk in at:

- ✓ Vaccination Centres
- ✓ Polyclinics
- ✓ Participating GP clinics
- ✓ Mobile Vaccination Stations



Mobile Vaccination Stations 9am to 11.30am 1pm to 5pm	Dates for first dose
179 Toa Payoh Central #01-462	8 - 9 September
207 Toa Payoh North #01-1259	
98 Aljunied Crescent #01-411	
645 Ang Mo Kio Ave 6 #01-4937	9 - 10 September
163 Jalan Teck Whye (Pavilion)	
22 Dover Crescent #01-358	
228 Lorong 8 Toa Payoh #01-152	10 - 11 September
255 Kim Keat Ave #01-134	



Get vaccinated. Protect yourself and loved ones.

Full list of vaccination locations at vaccine.gov.sg/locations

