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– and together  
they found love  
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# THE STRAITS TIMES

## US Vice-President Kamala Harris kicks off 3-day visit to S'pore

United States Vice-President Kamala Harris arrived yesterday on board Air Force Two for a three-day official visit to Singapore. Today, she will call on President Halimah Yacob at the Istana. Ms Harris will also meet Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. The two leaders will later hold a joint press conference. An orchid will be named in her honour in a ceremony at the Istana. She will also visit Changi Naval Base and US littoral combat ship USS Tulsa, which is in port for a multilateral exercise. Tomorrow, Ms Harris will deliver a policy speech and participate in a round-table discussion with the business community. This is only the second time Ms Harris has visited a foreign country since being elected in January. Her trip seeks to highlight the US' focus on revitalising alliances around the world, in particular in the Indo-Pacific region. Ms Harris is also expected to focus on global public health, including the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as economic partnerships and security.



US Vice-President Kamala Harris arriving on board Air Force Two yesterday. Today, she will call on President Halimah Yacob at the Istana. She will also meet Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

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## Delta strain behind the rising death toll from Covid-19

Salma Khalik  
Senior Health Correspondent

Twelve people in Singapore have died of Covid-19 this month, even as more than three in four people here have been fully vaccinated. The latest deaths, of an unvaccinated 91-year-old woman and a 87-year-old man who was partially vaccinated, were reported by the Ministry of Health yesterday. Against this, there were 37 deaths between January last year – when Covid-19 arrived in Singapore – and last month. Over that period, more than 64,000 people here were diagnosed with the disease. So why has the number of deaths surged, even as vaccination rates here have gone up? The short answer is the Delta variant. This variant, which is now infecting people in the community, spreads two to four times more easily, compared with the original wild-type virus. People who are infected with the Delta variant have very much

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## New Malaysian PM calls for unity to tackle pandemic

### Ismail Sabri invites opposition leaders to join recovery council and special Covid-19 panel

Ram Anand  
Malaysia Correspondent  
In Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's new Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob yesterday invited opposition leaders to join the effort to tackle the Covid-19 outbreak in his maiden speech that emphasised cooperation across the political divide. Datuk Seri Ismail, who helps the country's third administration in just three years, offered his rivals seats on the country's National Recovery Council and

special committee for dealing with Covid-19. He called for togetherness among all politicians, and urged a halt to any attempts to grab political power as the country grapples with a coronavirus crisis that has stretched its health resources and battered its economy. "Such swift changes of government within a short period of time can be construed only as detrimental to the people and the country," Mr Ismail said. He pledged to continue to steer Malaysia out of the Covid-19 crisis by ramping up vaccination to achieve herd immunity and revital-

ising the ailing economy. In a brief 15-minute address, Mr Ismail, who is Umno vice-president, promised that the Covid-19 strategies employed by the previous administration led by Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is now one of Mr Ismail's backers, would continue. His speech largely struck a conciliatory tone, emphasising inclusivity, togetherness and the spirit of the "Malaysian family". He also thanked his predecessor and all the parties from his Barisan Nasional (BN) alliance and Mr Muhyiddin's Perikatan Nasional (PN) pact that backed him to become prime minister with just a four-seat majority. "I pledge to do my best so that the trust placed in my team and me is not misplaced," Mr Ismail said.

Earlier yesterday, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong congratulated Mr Ismail on his appointment in a telephone call, during which both leaders reaffirmed Singapore and Malaysia's longstanding, deep and broad-ranging ties. Mr Ismail's speech was immediately welcomed by politicians from opposition parties as well as his own party, Umno. Opposition Democratic Action Party's MP Ong Kian Ming said the offer by Mr Ismail was a "good start", though the details of the positions offered remain to be seen. Speaking to news channel Astro Awani immediately after the conclusion of Mr Ismail's address, Dr Ong said that a political ceasefire is possible, depending on the outcome of negotiations.

Opposition leader and head of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition Anwar Ibrahim, who was also in the running for the post of prime minister, had previously urged his supporters to accept Mr Ismail's appointment and redirect their focus towards the next election. Mr Shahril Hamdan, Umno's information chief, said the party now has "no more excuses". Umno – especially its Supreme Council members – was critical of Mr Muhyiddin's administration as Malaysia's Covid-19 situation worsened. This led to 15 Umno MPs pulling their support from his PN pact, stripping him of a parliamentary majority and forcing his resignation last Monday. "Umno is now leading this government, and the people will evaluate us accordingly," Mr Shahril said on Astro Awani. The Umno-led BN was voted out of power for the first time in 61 years in the 2018 election, in which PH scored a shock victory after the 1Malaysia Development Berhad scandal that plagued former prime minister Najib Razak.

ramanand@sph.com.sg  
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## Why your newspaper is late

A major disruption to SPH's IT system yesterday held up our newspaper's online operations and print production process for most of the day. This resulted in delays in updating our website and in getting your copy of The Straits Times to you this morning. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

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MCI(P)059/01/2021 ★★

### SAFE OUTDOORS

**Up to 5 people per group**  
No mixing between groups

**If unvaccinated, limit group size to 2**

**Limit social gatherings to 2 a day**

**Wear a mask unless doing strenuous exercises**

**AVOID crowded parks. Check safedistparks.nparks.gov.sg**

### Higher vaccination rates will allow us to reopen earlier

Unvaccinated seniors are encouraged to get vaccinated to protect themselves

**Use Antigen Rapid Test kit to detect COVID-19 early**

**See a doctor early if unwell**

**Stay home as much as possible**

Get the latest on COVID-19 by signing up for the Gov.sg WhatsApp channel ([www.go.gov.sg/whatsapp](http://www.go.gov.sg/whatsapp)).