straitstimes.com

Singapore reports first two coronavirus deaths: A 75-year-old Singaporean woman and 64-year old Indonesian man

VANESSA LIU

4 minutes

SINGAPORE - Two patients died from Covid-19 on Saturday morning (March 21) due to complications, the first deaths the Republic has seen.

A 75-year-old Singaporean woman with a history of chronic heart disease and hypertension died at 7.52am.

Known as Case 90, she was linked to the cluster at The Life Church and Missions Singapore.

She had been admitted to the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) on Feb 23 for pneumonia and was confirmed to have Covid-19 the same day.

She had been in the intensive care unit since and developed serious complications. She died after 26 days in ICU, a Health Ministry statement said.

The second patient is a 64-year-old Indonesian national who was admitted in critical condition to intensive care at NCID on March

13, after arriving in Singapore from Indonesia the same day. He was confirmed to have the virus the next day.

Prior to his arrival, the patient - referred to as Case 212 – he had been hospitalised in Indonesia for pneumonia and had a history of heart disease.

"We are deeply saddened by their passing. Our thoughts are with their families during this difficult time. We will render all necessary assistance to their families," Health Minister Gan Kim Yong said on Saturday.

"I understand that Singaporeans will be affected by this news. But we must take courage and continue to play our part to fight this virus."

On Friday (March 20), Singapore confirmed 40 new Covid-19 cases, bringing the total number of infected patients here to 385.

Speaking to reporters at the Health Ministry on Saturday morning, Mr Gan reiterated that safe distancing measures which have been announced must be followed.

"We must all take the necessary precautions to keep ourselves and our families safe," he said. "We must stay united, work together, support one another, look out for each other. This way, by staying together, we will be able to prevail and overcome Covid-19 infection."

In a Facebook post after the two deaths were announced, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong sent his deepest condolences to the patients' loved ones.

"As we get more Covid-19 cases, more patients will need ICU care, and we must brace ourselves for more losses," he said.

Healthcare workers are doing their best to care for their patients, PM Lee said.

"So far, 131 of 385 cases have been discharged. Most are gradually improving. The Government is doing all we can to slow the spread of the virus, but everyone needs to support and comply with the measures we have put in place," he said. "We must work together to keep ourselves, our families, and Singapore safe."

In recent days, most of the new patients in Singapore have been imported cases, that is, returning residents and long-term pass holders with a travel history to Europe, North America, South-east Asia and other parts of Asia.

Besides strict border controls, rigorous contact tracing, quarantine and home isolation, the Government has implemented safe distancing measures such as smaller crowd sizes and the need to keep a safe space around individuals, especially vulnerable segments of the population like the elderly.

For example, all events and gatherings with 250 or more participants are to be suspended until June 30, while the suspension of all social activities for seniors by government agencies will be extended for another two weeks until April 7.