

1. UPDATE ON THE COVID-19 SITUATION IN SINGAPORE

On 9 Oct, PM Lee Hsien Loong addressed the nation on the COVID-19 situation and the path to the new normal. He emphasised that the next few months will be trying. **Restrictions will be relaxed cautiously.** The healthcare system and its workers will still be under pressure, and they must be protected for Singapore to get through the pandemic safely.

Here are the key points he made:

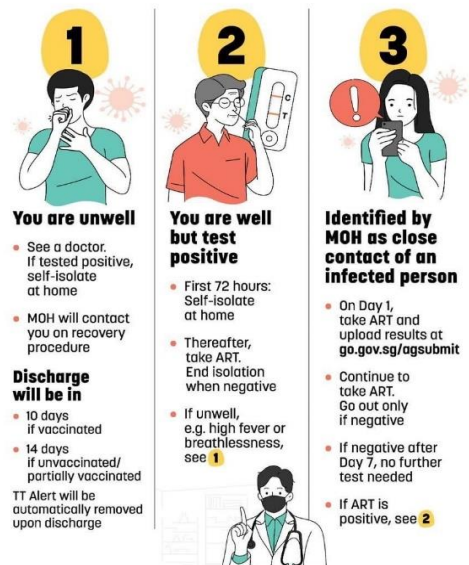
Adjusting our Strategy to the Evolving Situation

- **Original approach: Zero COVID.** Previously, preventing exposure was the best way to minimise serious illness and deaths. Measures then were sufficient to break the chain of transmission as the virus was not as infectious.
- **Need for a change in strategy.** The highly infectious Delta variant has changed the situation. With Singapore's low natural immunity, despite having a vaccination rate of 85%, cases will surge when stringent safe management measures are eased. However, we cannot stay closed off indefinitely.
- **Living with COVID-19.** The Heightened Alert was eased in August, after Singapore reached an 80% vaccination rate. However, as cases went up sharply, to ease the burden on healthcare workers and stabilise the healthcare system, restrictions were tightened in September.

Learning to live with COVID-19

- **Respect COVID-19, but do not be paralysed by fear.**
- **Be clear about what to do** if we test positive, or if we come into contact with someone who is infected.
- **Take personal and social responsibility,** by testing when necessary, self-isolating if tested positive, and consulting the doctor if symptomatic.
- **Protect the elderly** and reduce the numbers of those falling seriously ill.
- **Build up healthcare facilities** while moderating the surge in cases.
- **Connect back into the world,** by continuing to re-open borders safely.

Health Protocols



1 You are unwell

- See a doctor, if tested positive, self-isolate at home
- MOH will contact you on recovery procedure

Discharge will be in

- 10 days if vaccinated
- 14 days if unvaccinated/partially vaccinated

TT Alert will be automatically removed upon discharge

2 You are well but test positive

- First 72 hours: Self-isolate at home
- Thereafter, take ART. End isolation when negative
- If unwell, e.g. high fever or breathlessness, see 1

3 Identified by MOH as close contact of an infected person

- On Day 1, take ART and upload results at go.gov.sg/agsubmit
- Continue to take ART. Go out only if negative
- If negative after Day 7, no further test needed
- If ART is positive, see 2



“We have been talking about Total Defence, and the most important aspect is psychological defence. The reset of rules addresses the psychological status of our society as we overcome this pandemic.”

— Minister for Health Mr Ong Ye Kung at the COVID-19 Multi-Ministry Taskforce Press Conference on 9 Oct

The SAF's Role in the COVID-19 Home Recovery Programme (HRP)

- Since 29 Sep, personnel across the SAF have been roped in to help patients under MOH's COVID-19 HRP, the default mode of care for those with no or mild symptoms.
- Resources have been put to the areas of manning the HRP hotlines, and improving the telemedicine system. The employment of more personnel as Home Recovery Buddies ensured that more patients were getting telemedicine support quicker.
- As at 27 Oct, there are about 90 SAF regulars, 350 NSFs, and 10 volunteers from the SAF Volunteer Corps helping out in the HRP.

2. FPDA NATIONS MARK 50 YEARS OF DEFENCE COOPERATION



On 18 Oct, member states of the **Five Power Defence Agreements (FPDA)** commemorated its **50th anniversary** with an aerial and naval display at Marina South. The flypast comprised three segments, with the middle portion involving 10 air assets from Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand flying in formation.

Formed in 1971 against the backdrop of armed conflict across Southeast Asia, the FPDA comprises Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, and Britain. Under this pact, member states are to consult each other in the event of armed threats or attacks on Singapore or Malaysia.

Exercise Bersama Gold

From 4 to 18 Oct, militaries from FPDA member countries took part in the tri-service Exercise Bersama Gold.

- Traditionally known as Exercise Bersama Lima, this year's exercise was specially named Ex Bersama Gold to commemorate the 50th anniversary of FPDA.
- Consisting of "contactless" maritime and air components, as well as a virtual jungle warfare workshop, this year's exercise saw the first physical field training exercise to be conducted since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The FPDA is the second-oldest military partnership in the world (after NATO). I'm glad it is still active and relevant today. This cooperation fosters peace and security in the region, and Singapore continues to support it in a very different world.”

– PM Lee in a Facebook post on 17 Oct

11th FPDA Defence Ministers' Meeting

On 21 Oct, Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen attended the 11th FPDA defence ministers' meeting via teleconference. During the meeting, the Defence Chiefs:

- **Reaffirmed their nations' continued commitment** to the FPDA, and commended the achievements and enduring partnerships among the member countries.
- **Reiterated the purpose and founding principles of the FPDA:** to remain relevant and defensive in nature.
- **Acknowledged the FPDA's significant role and contribution** in strengthening member-nations' armed forces' capacity.
- **Commended the successful conduct of Exercises** Bersama Gold (Oct), Suman Warrior (Jul), and Bersama Shield (Apr), despite the pandemic.
- **Extended their deepest sympathies** to the countries, communities, and individuals impacted by the pandemic.

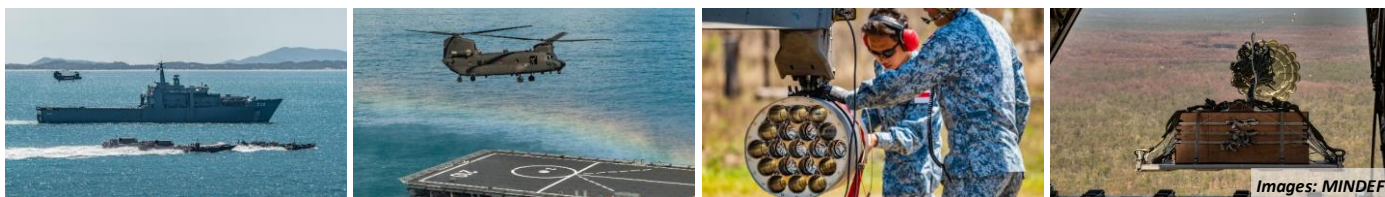


[Sources: ST and CNA, 5 Oct; PMO, MINDEF, ST, 18 Oct; ST, 21 Oct]

3. SAF RESUMES EXERCISE WALLABY IN AUSTRALIA

From 13 Sep to 21 Oct, the SAF held a scaled-down Exercise Wallaby at the Shoalwater Bay Training Area (SWBTA) in Queensland, Australia. This year's exercise involved about 580 personnel, with large-scale coordinated training across all three Services.

The resumption of Exercise Wallaby this year, after the suspension in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is testament to the **trust and cooperation between the Singapore and Australian armed forces**, as well as the **close and longstanding bilateral defence relations**.



[Sources: CNA, ST, 20 Oct; MINDEF, 20 Oct]

4. SINGAPORE PASSES LAW TO COUNTER FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

On 4 Oct, the Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act, or FICA, was passed to **prevent, detect** and **disrupt foreign interference in our domestic politics** conducted through hostile information campaigns (HICs) and local proxies.

What are HICs?

HICs involve the use of sophisticated online tools and tactics in a coordinated manner to advance one country's interest, such as influencing domestic political discourse, inciting social discord, and undermining political sovereignty. Examples include:



What is the FICA?

- The FICA targets foreign actors believed to be carrying out HICs in Singapore.
- The FICA does not target foreign individuals and publications reporting or commenting on Singapore politics, as long as this is done in an open, transparent and attributable way.
- FICA had arisen out of the work of the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods, which held hearings in 2018, amid concerns that disinformation had been used to influence events in other countries, including election results.

Why is the FICA needed?

- HICs go beyond fake news and malicious actors may use local proxies and bots. The FICA provides the protection for this, beyond the scope of the POFMA (Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act).
- To safeguard those who take part in our domestic politics. The bill introduces restrictions on potential threat vectors of influence, such as donations, volunteers, leadership, membership and affiliations.

“*The Bill is intended to address a serious threat that concerns our national security and sovereignty. These are important to ensure that Singaporeans continue to make their own choices on how we should govern our country and live our lives.*”

– Minister for Home Affairs and Law Mr K Shanmugam
in Parliament on 4 Oct

Incidents of Foreign Interference in Singapore and Abroad

- In the late-1980s, the First Secretary at the US Embassy in Singapore Hank Hendrickson cultivated Francis Seow (a former Solicitor-General and Law Society President) to organise a group of lawyers to contest the 1988 General Election. Mr Hendrickson had also told another lawyer, Patrick Seow, that Singaporean lawyers should contest elections against the government.
- In 2015, Reuters reported that China Radio International (a subsidiary of the Chinese government but hidden by front companies) was covertly backing at least 33 radio stations in 14 countries, including Australia and Thailand, to form a global network broadcasting positive news about China.
- US intelligence found that foreign actors had established “troll farms” to amplify domestic issues, and promote or run down certain candidates. For instance, over 1,000 pieces of online content were published against the Republican Party's candidate, Donald Trump. Proxies were also used to push allegations that discredited the Democratic Party's candidate.

[Sources: MCI, 7 May 88; RSIS, Mar 20; MHA, 13 Sep; MOH, PMO & ST, 9 Oct; ST, 10 Oct]

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