

Rise in imported cases not due to more travellers entering S'pore: Lawrence Wong

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The surge in imported Covid-19 cases seen in Singapore in recent weeks is not the result of more travellers entering the country, Education Minister Lawrence Wong said on Monday (Jan 25).

Instead, the rise is due to the much higher infection rate of the virus that continues to rage overseas, he said at a dialogue organised by the Institute of Policy Studies centred around a post-pandemic Singapore.

Mr Wong, the co-chair of the Government's Covid-19 task force, was responding to an audience question on how the city-state plans to sustain its trade and economy while balancing the risk of imported cases amid a surge in cases around the world.

Singapore on Monday reported 44 new cases of Covid-19, all of which were imported.

On Sunday, it reported 48 new imported cases, equalling the country's record for the highest number of daily imported cases set on March 23 last year.

"We have not increased (the number of) travellers coming into Singapore," Mr Wong said on Monday.

"Why have the numbers gone up? It's simply because the prevalence rate, the incidence rate, of the disease is much higher now. The virus is raging in countries everywhere."

Mr Wong said that the largest sources of travellers remain construction and foreign domestic workers, and the number of these workers entering Singapore has also not risen "in recent times".

These travellers are required to take a pre-departure test 72 hours before they arrive.

"But the nature of these sorts of tests is that they are not foolproof," Mr Wong said, adding that some people may initially test negative while the body is incubating the virus.

That is why, he said, these travellers have to serve stay-home notices of 14 days, or up to 21 days for certain countries, to quarantine them from the community.

"Those are precautions that we have been taking all along and we will continue to take... even as we have a continuous flow of people coming in, which is needed for Singapore's economy and society to function," he added.

"We do all that is necessary to take the necessary precautions and safeguards, and isolate these cases from seeping through our community."