

Singapore reports record jump in virus infections

April 16 2020



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Singapore late Thursday reported a record jump in coronavirus cases, most of them linked to packed dormitories housing foreign workers, as it battled a second wave of infections.

The affluent city-state had initially been held as a gold standard in the global fight against the COVID-19 disease, but a surge in the number of cases has left the government scrambling to contain the spread.

The Ministry of Health reported 728 new cases as of midday Thursday—the biggest rise in a single day—bringing the total number of infections to 4,427, including 10 deaths.

"The number of new cases amongst Work Permit holders residing in dormitories has increased significantly, in line with our continued efforts to actively test and isolate the infected workers," the ministry said in a statement.

It said 654, or around 90 percent, of the new cases were linked to the dorms and another 26 were [foreign workers](#) living outside the facilities.

Around 200,000 workers, mostly from South Asia, live in 43 dorms across the island, forming an essential part of the country's [work force](#).

Many of them are [construction workers](#) typically toiling for long hours, earning in the region of \$400 to \$500 a month building the city-state's glittering skyscrapers and shopping malls.

Following criticism of poor living conditions in the dorms, the government swung into action, moving thousands of them to other accommodation—including a floating complex—in order to decongest the facilities and lessen the chances of [infection](#).

The government is also providing meals and ramped-up cleaning services at quarantined dorms, and is helping run the facilities, which are usually privately operated.

Writing on Facebook this month, veteran Singapore diplomat Tommy

Koh slammed "the disgraceful way" in which the foreign workers were being treated.

He said it should be a "wake-up call to treat our indispensable foreign workers like a first world country should".

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Citation: Singapore reports record jump in virus infections (2020, April 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-singapore-virus-infections.html>

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