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Awesome Women
of Singapore | **C2**



Home In Focus • Taking
photos – the
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Singapore •
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gathering site
for maids
| **B1**



THE STRAITS TIMES

Steps taken to smooth vaccination process

Procedures streamlined; people urged to book afternoon slots for shorter wait times

Timothy Goh

Processes are being streamlined to reduce waiting times and people are encouraged to book afternoon slots for Covid-19 jabs, as Singapore looks to dose 1.25 million people by the end of next month.

More people tend to get vaccinated on weekday mornings and at polyclinics, the Ministry of Health (MOH) told The Straits Times.

"Those who want shorter waiting times should book appointments in the afternoons and at any of the 14 vaccination centres here," a spokesman said.

Some readers had told ST that they had to wait for two hours or more to get their jabs, and some had been repeatedly asked the same questions by healthcare workers.

MOH said yesterday that in the past, those getting their Covid-19 shots would have had to verify their personal information and medical history four times to ensure they were eligible, and that the vaccine was given to the right individual. This has now been cut to just twice – once at registration and before getting vaccinated.

MOH stressed, though, that the safety of those receiving the vaccination remains the top priority.

People are also encouraged to come at their scheduled appointment time, the spokesman said.

For vaccination centres like Changi Airport Terminal 4, MOH said it works with agencies to coordinate the arrival time of different groups. Measures including a sticker system have also been put in place to regulate the flow of individuals throughout the vaccination process there, making for a smoother experience.

MOH said the maximum queue time before registration at Terminal 4 is about 30 minutes during peak periods. At other centres, people can expect to wait for an hour or less, it said.

An 82-year-old retiree, who wanted to be known only as Mr Koh, said he encountered a queue of about 35 people when he arrived at 8.25am for his 8.30am appointment at Outram Polyclinic last Friday. Despite this, he said the process was "very orderly".

Speaking in Mandarin, he said: "It was well organised, every step was very clear." Bottled water was also provided for free during his half-hour wait to see a nurse.

However, he said he was later advised to not get vaccinated due to a pre-existing medical condition.

Mr Koh said he did not recall being asked to declare this while registering online, although he was unsure whether this was due to a technical fault or his own error as he was not familiar with the online booking system: "It can be a bit difficult for seniors to use the computer system. They should make it a little more straightforward."

Last Saturday, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat, who is also an MP for East Coast GRC, posted on Facebook that the Bedok Community Centre Covid-19 vaccination centre will be starting operations today. He wrote: "Do help our seniors get vaccinated, and I encourage you to do so when you are offered. By getting vaccinated, you are protecting not only yourself, but also your loved ones."

Another 16 centres are set to open, bringing the total to 31 by the end of the month.

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SEE THE BIG STORY • A4

THE STRAITS TIMES invisible asia

'My brother was a terrorist'

His teenage brother joined ISIS as a suicide bomber.

His family became outcasts in their village in Indonesia.

Racked by remorse, desperate for redemption, he's on a mission to save others from going down the same path.

The Big Story A8&9

Mr Muhammad In'am Amin, whose brother died carrying out a suicide attack in 2014, runs a programme to pull youth back from the brink of extremism.

S. China Sea • US disrupting stability: Top China diplomat

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right) yesterday accused the United States and other Western nations of disrupting regional stability in the South China Sea.

In a wide-ranging annual press conference, he also warned the US against supporting Taiwan's pro-independence movement. Both the US and China should engage in healthy competition, he said.



SEE THE BIG STORY • A6

Party official dies in police custody amid Myanmar protests

YANGON • An official from the party of detained Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi died overnight in police custody, associates said, while protests were held in at least half a dozen cities in some of the most widespread action against the Feb 1 coup.

The cause of Mr Khin Maung Latt's death was not known, but Reuters saw a photograph of his body with a bloodstained cloth around the head.

Mr Sithu Maung, a member of the dissolved Parliament, said in a Facebook post that Mr Khin Maung Latt was his campaign manager and was arrested last Saturday night in the Pabedan district of Yangon.

Police declined to comment. Myanmar's major trade unions have called on members to shut down the economy from today to support the anti-coup campaign, turning up the pressure on the junta as security forces cracked down on demonstrators staging widespread protests.

"To continue economic and business activities as usual... will only benefit the military as they repress the energy of the Myanmar people," an alliance of nine unions said.

Police fired stun grenades and tear gas to break up a sit-in protest by tens of thousands of people in Mandalay, the second-largest city, said Myanmar Now media group.

At least 70 people were arrested.

Earlier, troops occupied a university in the city after firing rubber bullets at people there, it reported. Two people were injured.

Police also launched tear gas and stun grenades at protesters in Yangon – Myanmar's largest city – and in the town of Lashio in northern Shan region, videos posted on Facebook showed.

VIDEOS OF BEATINGS continued on A2

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