

# Total cases could hit 40,000 this month: Experts

But they say containment measures will help keep situation from spiralling out of control

POSITIVE SIGN

**This is what we'd see if we were successfully flattening the curve – case counts rising but in a more controlled manner.**



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ALEX COOK**, vice-dean of research at NUS' Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, who noted that while the total case counts have continued to rise, the numbers have recently started to stabilise.

**Yuen Sin**

The total number of coronavirus cases here could hit 30,000 or 40,000 this month, but containment measures will help to keep the situation from spiralling out of control, experts said.

Associate Professor Alex Cook, vice-dean of research at the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, noted that while the total case counts have continued to rise, the numbers have recently started to stabilise.

"This is what we'd see if we were

successfully flattening the curve – case counts rising but in a more controlled manner," said Prof Cook, an expert in infectious disease modelling who had earlier predicted that infections could reach 10,000 or 20,000 by the end of April.

From the first coronavirus case on Jan 23, Singapore took about 13 weeks to cross the 10,000 mark on April 22. This figure doubled in a much shorter time in the last two

weeks to hit just over 20,000 yesterday, with foreign workers in dormitories accounting for the bulk of the cases.

But the number of new cases reported each day has remained below 1,000 for the past 13 days and has trended down since April 20, when a high of 1,426 new cases were reported.

Prof Cook said recent figures demonstrate a growing divergence

between epidemiological models and actual cases.

"The models say the epidemic should be growing ever higher but the data is instead stabilising... It still seems possible that we'll hit 30,000 or 40,000 infections this month, but perversely that would be a success compared to an unmitigated epidemic growth scenario."

Dr Leong Hoe Nam, an infectious

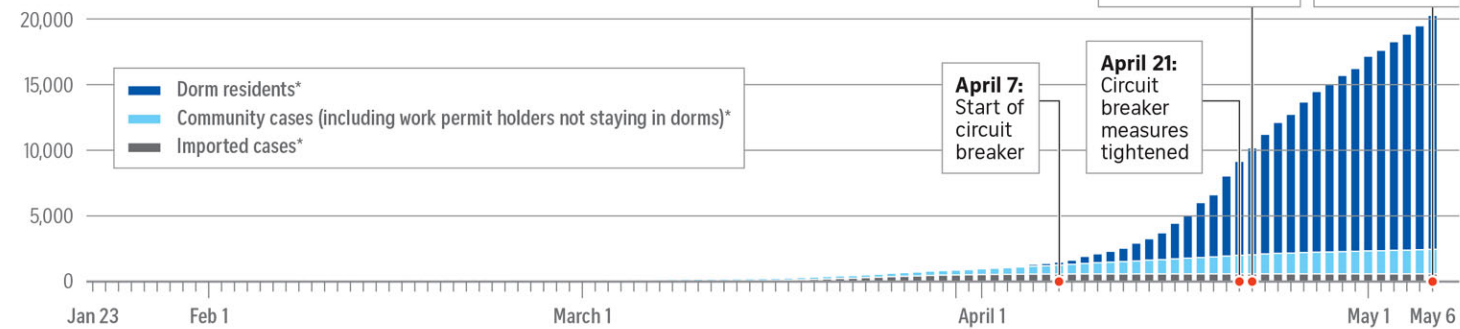
diseases expert at Mount Elizabeth Novena Hospital, agreed that cases could cross 40,000 this month but said it is likely that Singapore has gone past the peak of daily confirmed cases.

"The number of 500 to 800 which we see every day represents the cases that were infected earlier," he said, adding that he expects the daily case figures to remain around the same level, though

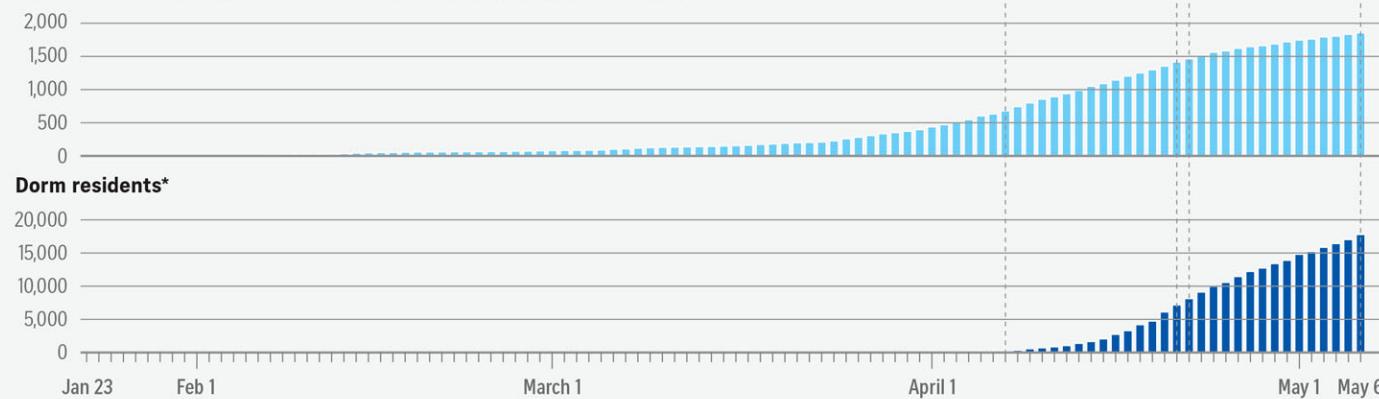
## Covid-19 cases in Singapore

10,000 cases in three months; 20,000 cases in another two weeks

**Cumulative total**



**Community cases (including work permit holders not staying in dorms)\***



NOTE: \*Cumulative total

Source: MINISTRY OF HEALTH STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



Customers at Mustafa Centre in Little India yesterday, after the supermarket was reopened with precautionary measures in place. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



Singapore flags put up at Marsiling Lane Market and Cooked Food Centre. Further easing of circuit breaker measures will begin on Tuesday. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

there could be fluctuations.

Professor Paul Tambyah from NUS' Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine said cases both inside and outside the dormitories can be controlled by identification and isolation, contact tracing, quarantine and monitoring of contacts.

"With that in place, there is a good chance that (daily community cases) will go down to zero like they did in February. In fact,

the same approach on a much larger scale is also likely to work in the dorms," he said.

A further easing of circuit breaker measures will begin on Tuesday, such as allowing barbers and hairdressers to reopen.

This will be closely monitored and is unlikely to have a major impact on case figures, said Prof Tambyah.

yuensin@sph.com.sg