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Experts have come up with a Covid-19 report card that can assess a country's performance in response to the pandemic, and could signal if nations are ready to ease lockdowns and allow international travel.

The commentary, published yesterday in top medical journal *The Lancet*, outlined seven indicators to assess national performance, ranging from ability to detect and break transmission chains, to maintaining food and medicine supply chains, and protecting the vulnerable.

"The seven indicators are not just about the potential impact to human health, they directly translate to the ability to preserve lives and livelihoods, to minimise all-round impact to human lives, in an equitable manner," said Professor Teo Yik Ying, dean of the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, who is one of the authors of the paper.

The others were Professor Dale Fisher, senior consultant in the infectious diseases division at the National University Hospital and chair of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network steering committee, and Dr David Nabarro, special envoy of the WHO for the Covid-19 response.

The paper noted that though some countries – among them the United States and Britain – had ranked highly under existing assessments such as the

A report card to assess a country's Covid-19 response

Nation's performance could indicate if it is ready to ease lockdown or even allow for international travel



Countries like New Zealand (far left) and Vietnam have performed well by introducing effective social distancing measures, among other things. PHOTOS: AFP

Global Health Security Index (GHSI), an annual assessment of how ready countries are to deal with infectious disease outbreaks, this did not reflect their actual pandemic preparedness.

Meanwhile, countries like Vietnam and New Zealand, ranked 50th and 35th respectively on the index, did well in the pandemic.

"The GHSI regrettably relied only on open source data for

their appraisal, but there are some countries that do not publicise their pandemic preparedness plans openly," Prof Teo told *The Straits Times*.

The seven indicators serve as checkpoints beyond daily case numbers, which are often used to judge a country's Covid-19 performance, but are in fact unreliable in assessing its response, the authors noted.

Case numbers may not reflect

the true situation as they are dependent on a country's testing strategy and capacity, and the extent to which individuals go for testing. It also neglects how effectively clusters have been contained and virus transmission suppressed.

Australia saw new daily coronavirus cases fall to single digits at the end of May but is now witnessing more than 200 new cases a day.

Its second most populous state, Victoria, reported another 238 cases over 24 hours on Wednesday.

Generally, places that have

done well include Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong, New Zealand and South Korea, Prof Teo said.

"Singapore in my opinion has also done well for almost all the indicators, and even though we were unable to avoid the outbreak affecting migrant workers in the country, it is the remedial actions that matter.

"Singapore continues to provide financial safety nets to all migrant workers through provision of complete medical coverage for Covid-19 infection and salary support," said Prof Teo.

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