

SINGAPORE

23k

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO VISITED RIVER HONGBAO AT GARDENS BY THE BAY FROM LAST WEDNESDAY TO SATURDAY | B4

Small gestures keep love alive for couples in Covid-19 battle

The coronavirus pandemic has over the past year inflicted a huge emotional and psychological toll on many people around the world. It has also affected marriages and relationships. **Sherlyn Sim** finds out how three couples on the front line here keep their marriages going.

For one week, when the police officer fetched his wife, a nurse, from the hospital, she would cry all the way home because of the stresses of the job.

Mr Afiq Ashraf Ra'im, an Emergency Response Team operator at the Singapore Police Force (SPF), wanted to hold his wife's hand or hug her.

But he could not because the couple had to take a shower first before having any physical contact.

Mr Afiq, 30, told The Straits Times how he and his wife, Ms Khairunnisa Suwarno, 32, a senior staff nurse at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, coped.

"She would be really exhausted from her shift... It pains me to see her cry. I try to be strong for her, treat her well and listen to her worries and frustrations," he said.

The married couple of two years, who do not have children, have rarely seen each other in the past year as Mr Afiq works at the counter-terrorist arm of the SPF, where officers can work shifts of up to 12 hours.

Ms Khairunnisa works various shifts to plan the care for patients and assist those who are unable to carry out their daily activities due to health issues.

When the Covid-19 outbreak worsened last April, Mr Afiq was deployed to handle operations at migrant worker dormitories while Ms Khairunnisa assisted at the hospital's intensive care unit.

Their long and irregular hours meant that they could not even go grocery shopping together.

And even though she works in a hospital, where there is the risk of



Mr Muhammad Nazarul Jamil, a senior executive in the special outpatient clinic ambulatory operations department at Raffles Hospital, and his wife, Ms Siti Adhawiyah Mohamed Ali, a manager in the same department at the hospital, outside the Changi Exhibition Centre last July. The couple were working separate shifts at a community care facility there for migrant workers. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SITI ADHAWIYAH MOHAMED ALI

medical staff catching the coronavirus, Ms Khairunnisa worries about her husband getting infected instead.

"As a nurse, I am well equipped with all the medical equipment in the ward and already know what the patients in the hospital are suf-

fering from. My husband is out there on the ground meeting people with unknown medical backgrounds or histories."

To cope, the couple pray daily for each other's safety and send caring

ADJUSTMENTS continued on B2

Lion dance • Troupes adapt to new normal | B4



Online



VIDEO Horror crash

Messages of shock and condolences have poured in from friends and family of the five killed in the Tanjong Pagar crash. Watch how the accident unfolded on the second day of Chinese New Year.

str.sg/crash-timeline

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