Outbreaks ‘are a global security issue’

Infectious disease outbreaks should not be seen as just a health problem: NUS president

Samantha Tan

These days, it does not matter if an infectious disease outbreak happens in a small village in West Africa or a hospital in New York City. With air travel, both could be considered global crises with potentially serious consequences. The region’s public health systems are vulnerable and will continue to exist in an era of globalisation, with travel and movement of people continuing to accelerate. The threat of a deadly infectious disease outbreak could reverberate across continents and countries like any other global crisis.

"We can no longer consider a place remote," said Professor Tan, a former director of medical services at the Ministry of Health. This was clearly demonstrated in the recent Ebola outbreak, when it is believed the disease took root in the remote region of Guinea in West Africa early last year and reached the US last year.