

Looking for a hawker stall? Find it on Google Maps by early 2020

Vanessa Liu

It will be easier for hawker centre patrons to look for their favourite stall online by next year.

All 114 hawker centres here will have their individual stalls marked with separate pins on the Google Maps app by early 2020, showing their exact locations within the premises.

In addition, app users will be able to use the in-app Street View feature to browse every stall virtually, and see the storefronts and signboards clearly.

This will be the first time the public can view the interior of a hawker centre via Street View. Previously, the feature allowed users to look only at the exterior of hawker centres.

The images will be captured on foot by Google operators with the latest version of the Street View Trekker – a system of seven 20-megapixel cameras mounted on a backpack providing a 360-degree view of the surroundings.

Besides virtually browsing a hawker centre's interior, app users can also look up detailed information of every stall there, including its name, stall number and photos via an online search on the app.

The joint initiative to document Singapore's hawker centres was announced by Google yesterday at Chinatown Market, together with the National Heritage Board, the National Environment Agency (NEA) and the Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore.

The three local organisations were behind the nomination of



Street View Trekker operator Keith Lee, 24, capturing indoor imagery at Dunman Food Centre yesterday. All 114 hawker centres here will have their individual stalls marked with separate pins on the Google Maps app by early next year, showing their exact locations within the premises. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Singapore's hawker culture to the Unesco Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in March this year.

NEA deputy chief executive Khoo Seow Poh said this joint initiative will allow more than 6,000 hawkers to have an online

presence on a platform that is widely used.

He added that the NEA will work with stakeholders, including hawk-

ers' associations, to inform hawkers of the initiative and raise awareness of its benefits.

Five Trekkers will be used to

collect data at the 114 hawker centres. They started yesterday at Chinatown Market and Dunman Food Centre.

The images will be collected and processed, and be ready for public use by early next year.

Among the centres whose imagery will be collected next are Geylang Serai Market, Tekka Market, Maxwell Food Centre and Golden Mile Food Centre.

Mr Amit Morya, programme manager of Street View APAC, said that the initiative helps bring the important hawker culture into the digital age.

"By documenting all 114 hawker centres, we hope to help more people get a glimpse into this fascinating part of Singapore's culture and ultimately help bolster the local hawkers' businesses," he said.

Hawkers do not need to pay for the service.

Ms Connie Chan, 48, who has been running the Happies Bak Kut Teh stall at Chinatown Market for three years, told The Straits Times that the added feature will increase the exposure of hawkers online and level the playing field with bigger names in the food and beverage industry.

Ms Chan said: "Hawkers like us don't have a very wide profit margin, so we won't actually pay to boost our posts on search engines, unlike the bigger eateries which probably pay for advertising."

"With this initiative by Google, everyone is on the same platform. It is fairer for everybody."

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Early detection and treatment key in dengue fight: Expert

She says 46-year-old who died from disease likely sought treatment late

Timothy Goh and Jeanell Kiew

The 46-year-old man who died from dengue had likely sought treatment late and was already very ill when he did so, said the executive director of Singapore's National Centre for Infectious Diseases.

Professor Leo Yee Sin told The Straits Times yesterday that adults and young adults in good health and without pre-existing conditions are typically able to fight through the infection.

But, she added, early diagnosis, early treatment and close monitoring are key in combating dengue.

As of July 20, nine people in Singapore, including the 46-year-old, have died from dengue this year.

The other eight victims were all above the age of 60.

Prof Leo said that although dengue can affect people of all ages, those between the ages of 12 and 60 usually have "no issue" fighting the disease.

In Singapore, it is the elderly – those around the age of 60 and above – who are at higher risk of dying from dengue.

There are two main reasons. First, symptoms of dengue tend to be less severe in older individuals, making it harder to detect. For instance, while a 30-year-old may have sudden high fever and intense body aches, a 70-year-old may have only a mild fever and mild body aches.

But despite this, the disease will take its toll on the elderly patient as it places a lot of strain on the body, she said. This can lead to multi-organ failure and death.

The elderly also tend to have more pre-existing clinical illnesses, and dengue will complicate the management of these.

For example, a dengue patient taking pills for high blood pressure will need to monitor his blood pressure as dengue will naturally lower it. As a result, he may need to adjust the medication dosage. If the patient fails to do so or is unaware that he has dengue, his blood pres-



Officers from the National Environment Agency checking for mosquito larvae in Woodlands. As of July 20, nine people in Singapore, including a 46-year-old man, have died from dengue this year. ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

Six symptoms of dengue

- Sudden onset of fever for two to seven days.
- Severe headache with pain behind the eyes.
- Joint and muscle pain.
- Skin rashes.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Mild bleeding, such as bleeding gums or a nosebleed.

These symptoms will usually appear four to seven days after a person has been bitten, but may appear any time from between three and 14 days after the bite. SOURCE: MINISTRY OF HEALTH

sure may drop dangerously low.

Prof Leo said those who are around the age of 12 or younger are also at risk of plasma leakage if they are infected with dengue a second time. In this case, fluid and proteins leak out of blood vessels, causing a drop in blood pressure, which can lead to death.

Those who are least at risk of dying from dengue are young adults and adults, aged between 12 and 60, who have not been infected with dengue before.

Although they tend to experience worse manifestations of the symptoms of dengue – a sudden onset of fever for two to seven days, a severe headache with pain behind the eyes, joint and muscle pain, skin rashes, nausea and vomiting, and mild bleeding – the disease is usually mildest for them.

Prof Leo warned, however, that there is a "critical period" for intervention. Around the fifth day of a dengue infection, a patient's body will undergo a lot of unstable and rapid changes which are difficult to recover from.

This is why early detection,

treatment and monitoring are important, she said, adding that those with fever or muscle aches should consult a doctor as there are tests that can be done to detect dengue fever.

She added that the fatality rate of dengue in Singapore is "very, very low" – just nine out of 8,020 cases, but noted that the death of the 46-year-old highlighted the importance of educating the public about early intervention.

ST spoke to 20 residents living in Woodlands Drive 50, the last known address of the 46-year-old victim.

"It is worrying, and we are in a dengue red zone, so I do what I can at home to prevent mosquitoes from coming in," said 67-year-old housewife Pang Choo Kwee.

A banner on the street said the area has seen some 60 dengue cases. Disposable plastic bowls containing stale water were seen around several blocks, with one having cat food mixed with the water.

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