

NTU researchers develop mobile app to fight dengue

By **MARIA MALA YOGALINGAM**

RESEARCHERS at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) have developed a mobile app that will collate inputs from the community on instances of mosquito breeding and so identify dengue hotspots across the country.

Members of the public who spot a mosquito breeding site can snap photographs of it with their smartphones and submit it to Mo-Buzz, which will geo-tag these inputs and display them live on Google Maps in the system.

Developed by the university's Centre of Social Media Innovations for Communities (Cosmic), the app will also tap into historical data on weather and dengue incidents to even predict dengue hotspots up to a month in advance.

The app, which will be free, has not been launched here, as NTU is in talks with the environmental authority, National Environment Agency (NEA), which will administer the app.

It does appear, however, that it will debut first in a pre-launch in Sri Lanka in about three weeks. The World Health Organization (WHO) has invited Cosmic to implement the system in a rural district of the dengue-prone island nation, which has been hit by more than 70,000 dengue cases since 2009.

Research on Mo-Buzz started in 2010, with the design and development starting the following year.

News of the system, which has had \$150,000 invested in it by the Interactive Digital Media R&D Pro-

gramme Office of the Media Development Authority (MDA), comes at the half-way point in a year which has already seen 9,400 cases of dengue, including two deaths.

There were 4,632 cases in the whole of last year, and 5,330 the year before.

May O Lwin, principal investigator of the programme, said: "The main advantage is that it enables everyone to take preventive

The WHO has invited Cosmic to implement the system in a rural district in Sri Lanka in a pre-launch debut in July.

action ahead of time, which is what is important for preventing dengue and saving lives."

Associate Professor Lwin said that once Mo-Buzz gets the green light here, the search will be on for corporate partnerships; online digital firms, mobile phone providers, and phone line providers are potential partners.

She said: "We're happy for organisations to come on board to partner us."

"In Sri Lanka, one of our partners will be Mobitel - the largest telecom operator there. So for Singapore - StarHub, SingTel, if they came onboard, that will be great."