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NTU researchers to pilot dengue reporting and prediction system in Sri Lanka

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BY KENNETH LOW - 14 HOURS 10 MIN AGO

SINGAPORE — A team of Singapore researchers from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) have developed a social media-based system that can predict where and when dengue might occur.

The application, called Mo-Buzz by its creators from the university's Centre of Social Media Innovations for Communities (COSMIC), is set to be piloted in the Sri Lankan village of Moneragala, which is part of the World Health Organization's (WHO) global network of age-friendly cities and communities.

The creators of Mo-Buzz, which will also be used by the Colombo Municipal Council's public health programme as part of a prelaunch, are also currently in "early stage discussions" with the National Environment Agency for a possible field test and implementation of the system in Singapore, noted the programme's principal investigator, Associate Professor May O Lwin.

Said Professor Lwin: "We are in discussions with Tan Tock Seng Hospital to develop the next generation of this (system) to fight flu and influenza...and also, we are in discussion with the Singapore Heart Foundation to utilise the system for saving lives where there are potential cases for heart attack."

The system will involve citizens in the fight against dengue by allowing them to report dengue symptoms and possible mosquito breeding sites via their smartphones and tablets.

It is also able to make predictions about dengue outbreaks up to four weeks in advance based on parameters such as rainfall and wind direction; dengue incidence data, as well as mosquito population and distribution.

"What we're hoping with a dynamic system like Mo-Buzz is to create active channels of communication between citizens and health authorities during the dengue season. The main advantage is that it helps everyone take preventive action well ahead of time, which is what is important for preventing dengue and saving lives," said Assoc Prof Lwin, a specialist in public

health communication research.