

Why open-air hawker centres should stay

I REFER to Ms Leong Wai Ching's letter last Friday, "Convert hawker centres into air-con foodcourts".

I object to her suggestion of converting open-air hawker centres into air-conditioned foodcourts, and I urge her to look at the bigger picture.

First, such foodcourts require higher maintenance, and stallholders will be charged higher rents. The higher costs will then be passed on to consumers.

Second, open-air hawker centres have become a part of Singapore's heritage. Doing away with them is akin to destroying a part of our heritage.

Singapore is a young country struggling to create an identity. Ask anyone what represents Singapore culture and the reply is likely to include hawker food. Hawker centres have also become great places for residents to bond.

Third, not all air-conditioned foodcourts are squeaky clean. Some of those I have visited were as dirty as hawker cen-

tres. Their white tiles were smudged with black stains, and the toilets were revolting.

Most importantly, air-conditioners are bad for the environment. Singapore is pushing to be more environmentally friendly, and air-conditioned foodcourts will put a big dent on these efforts.

There are other ways hygiene can be improved at hawker centres. There should be more inspections and perhaps spot checks to ensure a high level of hygiene. Air-conditioned foodcourts are not the answer.

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