



Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Yaacob Ibrahim placing the SOK logo at the Sims Place Hawker Centre's entrance. With him are Sims Place Hawker's Association chairman Lin Si Qi and NEA chief executive Andrew Tan. ST PHOTO: LAU FOOK KONG

Market, hawker centre at Sims Place are OK

BY VICTORIA VAUGHAN

A GEYLANG hawker centre is the first to receive the Singapore's OK seal of approval following the relaunch of the National Environment Agency's hygiene campaign.

The market, hawker centre and toilets at Sims Place were given the award yesterday by Environment and Water Resources Minister Yaacob Ibrahim, who placed the revamped SOK logo at the entrance to the centre.

Ten more hawker centres are expected to be given the endorsement by the end of the week, although the NEA was unable to confirm locations.

The campaign, first started in response to the 2003 Sars outbreak, was revived on May 1 as part of the NEA's efforts to "promote good public and personal hygiene in public areas" and "prevent spread of infectious diseases".

Dr Yaacob stressed the role of hawker associations in maintaining hygiene standards, saying it was up to them to "apply pressure" to stall holders whose hygiene standards had lapsed.

Sims Place Hawker's Association chairman Lin Si Qi, who owns a frozen food stall, said she was happy they had received the award and that it was important to maintain good hygiene every day.

Mr Justin Lim, general manager of

Jalan Besar Town Council, which is responsible for cleaning the common areas of Sims Place, said that public toilets were generally a concern so the SOK award would help to enhance confidence in the cleanliness of the centre.

The SOK campaign is a voluntary programme for hawker centres to pledge their commitment to hygiene, and it is hoped that it will foster public confidence in eating out. All premises that obtain the award will be re-assessed every year.

The SOK endorsement is an added layer of hygiene vetting, as each stall must first obtain a licence.

The NEA conducts random checks every six to eight weeks on all the stalls, which are awarded grades from A to D.

Pre-schools, construction sites and dormitories have been sent reminder notices about hygiene and the NEA will begin awarding them in the near future if they wish to participate.

To receive the SOK award, hawker stalls and markets must ensure they dispose of waste properly, keep common areas and toilets clean and litter-free, have effective pest control and spring-clean at least four times a year.

Food stalls must also ensure hygienic preparation of food and markets must display goods neatly, maintain meat chillers and ensure drains are clean.