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TTSH sees spike in PMD injuries in 2 years

79 riders hospitalised in first nine months of this year, almost 70% increase from 2017: Study

Christopher Tan
Senior Transport Correspondent

Trauma doctors at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) are seeing a rise in injuries among personal mobility device (PMD) riders, according to a study conducted by the hospital over a 33-month period.

In the first nine months of this year, 79 PMD riders were admitted to TTSH for injuries – an average of nine per month. This compared with 87 last year, or seven per month; and 47 in 2017, or four per month.

This translates to a nearly 70 per cent increase in two years.

The figures come on the back of a national study completed earlier this year by Dr Wong Ting Hway, a general surgeon at Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

The national study found that there was twice the risk of riders getting hospitalised as a result of injuries when using powered PMDs, compared with manual devices.

Both studies did not cover third-party injuries (such as pedestrians or cyclists in a collision with PMDs).

In the TTSH study, the hospital found that more than half of the PMD riders it treated for injuries were between 20 and 39 years old –



A man riding an e-scooter in the Bugis area. According to the study by Tan Tock Seng Hospital, a large percentage of PMD riders hospitalised had serious injuries, and more than half of them were injured after they had skidded. ST FILE PHOTO



Mr Davy Yiu lost control of his e-scooter while trying to avoid two pedestrians, landed on his device and crushed his spleen. PHOTO: COURTESY OF DAVY YIU

similar to the median age of 33 in the SGH study.

TTSH said head and neck injuries accounted for the highest percentage of cases at 41 per cent, followed by external injuries such as abrasions and lacerations (26 per cent) and facial injuries (12 per cent).

A large percentage of those hospi-

talised had serious injuries, and more than half of them were injured after they had skidded. In the period studied, the hospital witnessed six fatalities.

In February, the speed limit for PMDs on footpaths was cut from 15kmh to 10kmh.

Dr Teo Li Tserng, director of

Trauma Services at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, told The Straits Times: "What stood out is that despite PMDs being relatively slow, the severity of injuries related to them is no less than those incurred by motorcyclists."

Dr Teo noted too that the injured tend to be "young people who

should be up and about contributing to society". He said "one-third" of these injured riders went away with "long-term disabilities".

Dr Teo added that these cases have increased the hospital's load, "but it's something we have to

RIDER SKIDDED continued on B2

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Mr Barkath Ali Abu Bakar and his grandmother Hasana Ahmad at her house in Jalan Binjai earlier this month. Madam Hasana, who is the longest-staying resident in the Katong estate, will have to say goodbye to her home when her lease is up in December next year. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

37 families to be affected as SLA reclaims state land in Katong

Residents to move out by end-December next year for major restoration and repair works to be carried out



THE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Michelle Ng

For the past 44 years, 85-year-old Madam Hasana Ahmad has set up a tent outside her home for Hari Raya celebrations – inviting up to 500 family members, friends and neighbours.

But next year's celebrations could be the last to be held in the place she has called home for 44 years.

The Singapore Land Authority (SLA) has issued a notice to the 37 families living in her estate in Katong to move out by the end of December next year so that major restoration and repair works can be carried out on the houses.

For Madam Hasana, who has 10 children, 33 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren, this means she will have to say goodbye to the home she has known for more than half her life.

"Every day I eat my breakfast, open my window, sit there and talk to my trees. I have planted them nicely but now I have to move away. Even my grass cannot stay," she said.

"I feel very sad. Every day I cry, so sayang (a pity' in Malay) but what to do?"

Built in the 1950s, the cluster of 42 two-storey terraced homes off

A home full of memories



SCAN TO WATCH



<https://str.sg/jalanbinjai>

Haig Road – in Jalan Binjai, Jalan Gajus, Jalan Tembusu and Jalan Beringin – are state properties rented out by the Government to the highest bidder. They once served as government quarters.

By this time next year, most of Madam Hasana's neighbours would have moved out of the estate.

Her lease is up in December next year, while the leases for six other families The Straits Times' spoke to expire in early to mid-2020.

Leases are based on a two-year tenancy period and rents typically range from \$2,500 to \$3,200, depending on the bids.

SLA said residents who wished to renew their tenancies would be

given one final tenancy ending in end-December next year.

Madam Hasana is the longest-staying resident in the estate.

In 1975, Madam Hasana and her husband, who died in 1999, moved into the corner unit in Jalan Binjai. The monthly rent then was \$250. Her rent is now \$2,500 a month, paid for by her second son.

Her 1,076 sq ft, two-bedroom corner unit comes with a front porch and back garden. Over the years, she has grown morning, mango and jackfruit trees, sharing the harvest with her neighbours.

Her 10 children grew up in the house and held their wedding celebrations in a tent outside the house. They have all moved out but have family gatherings in the house every weekend. She now lives with her grandson Ahmed Iqbal, 24.

To continue the tradition, Mr Iqbal will be holding his wedding solemnisation in the house later this year.

Madam Hasana grew up in an attic hut in a kampung and has never lived in a high-rise building.

Her daughter Maryam Mohamed, 57, said: "My mother is most at home on the ground, not high up in the air. So now, in preparation for the move, I get her to stay in my house a few nights each week so she can slowly get used to living in an apartment."

Residents say the kampung spirit is well and alive in the close-knit estate.

Finance and information technology director Hara Mohanty, who has been living in Jalan Tembusu for 10 years, occasionally has potluck dinners with his neighbours, who are mostly foreigners,

in the same street.

"It's such a multicultural place and you really can't get this kampung environment in an HDB estate," said the 47-year-old, who lives with his wife and two daughters.

Neighbours also look out for each other.

Group fashion director Johnny Khoo, 50, said his neighbours helped his 83-year-old mother when she fell in their house a couple of years ago. His mother has been living with him in a corner unit in Jalan Binjai for 10 years.

Business owner Terry Peh, 36, who moved in with his wife and two dogs in 2016, said the charm of the neighbourhood attracted him to the estate.

"I lived in an apartment for more than 30 years but there's something about this old house. I feel alive here. You wake up to the sound of nature and there are hornbills outside your window; it's a whole different lifestyle," he says.

The SLA notice, which was sent last month, said major restoration and repair works affecting the roof and internal building elements, among others, will be implemented "to ensure these properties remain relevant and structurally durable".

An SLA spokesman said that upgrading works will commence in January 2021 and are expected to be completed by the end of 2021.

"Tenants who wish to return after the completion of the upgrading works can register their interest to rent the property at the prevailing market rental," she said.

In the meantime, SLA and the estate's managing agent Knight Frank Property Asset Management are in touch with residents to assist with relocation matters, including offering rental options of alternative state properties, she added.

SLA manages more than 5,000 state properties, including colonial black-and-white houses, across Singapore.

Madam Hasana hopes the rent will not be too high for her to return later.

She said: "If rent is low or the same, I want to come back. Better if I can stay here until I die. This is a very good home."

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Man who moved undeclared \$1.18m cash in and out of S'pore fined

Malavika Menon

A 37-year-old man has been convicted for failing to declare the movement of \$1.18 million in cash in and out of Singapore over the course of one year.

Alvin Lee Khai Wui was fined \$30,000, the police said yesterday.

The police said they were alerted on Feb 22 last year that Lee had attempted to smuggle \$300,000 into Singapore at Tuas Checkpoint.

Lee was stopped for a routine check when driving into Singapore in a Malaysia-registered car.

When asked by the immigration officer on duty if he had anything to declare, Lee said he did not.

The immigration officer carried out an inspection and found a laptop bag on the back passenger seat of the car.

Lee was asked to open the laptop bag, which contained a purple pouch with \$300,000 – made up of 300 pieces of \$1,000 banknotes – which was then seized.

Lee had intended to use the money to gamble at the Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) casino in Singapore and failed to report to an immigration officer regarding the movement of more than \$20,000 in cash.

Police said that investigations also showed Lee had committed 21 similar offences between June 2017 and February last year.

Lee, who is a Malaysian national, is the executive director of ML Sepakat, a Malaysian construction company dealing with infrastructure work.

He claimed that the undeclared money he brought into Singapore was his savings and money from the sale of properties in Malaysia.

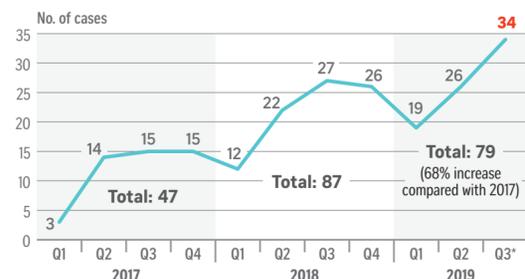
The money he took out of Singapore included his withdrawals and winnings from RWS and Marina Bay Sands casinos.

Lee was convicted in the state courts last Thursday.

Anyone convicted of not declaring the physical movement of cash exceeding \$20,000, or the equivalent in foreign currency, into and out of Singapore, can be fined up to \$50,000, jailed for up to three years, or both.

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Rising number of PMD accidents



*2019 Q3 includes data till 26/09/2019

Source: TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Rider skidded trying to avoid two pedestrians

FROM B1

adapt to".

He recommended simple precautions which riders can take to reduce risk of injury, such as wearing a helmet and proper attire.

"None of those we attended to wore helmets," he noted. "To start, perhaps companies can issue helmets to their riders."

Dr Teo added that many of the injured riders said they were avoiding pedestrians when they skidded.

Mr Davy Yiu is a case in point. The 48-year-old business owner was crossing a street on an e-scooter in November 2017 when he avoided two pedestrians. He could not slow down in time because the cruise control was engaged.

As a result, he clipped a fence as he turned onto a walkway, lost control, landed on his device and crushed his spleen.

"I thought my lung had collapsed because I couldn't breathe for about 15 minutes. After I got home, I passed out," he said.

Doctors had to remove his spleen, an organ which acts as a blood filter and is crucial to the body's immune system.

Mr Yiu said he still rides an e-scooter because he lives close to where he works and uses it to get to his office. "But I make sure the cruise control is disengaged," he added.

TTSH is organising a public fo-

rum on PMDs – the first hospital here to do so. Titled "Life doesn't have a reset button. Ride safe", the forum will be held on Saturday, from 10am to noon, at the TTSH Theatre, Level 1.

Early this month, Senior Minister of State for Transport Janil Puthucheary told Parliament the Government may ban PMDs if rider behaviour does not improve. He was expressing concern over the number of accidents involving PMDs that had increased with their increasing use.

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SEVERE INJURIES

What stood out is that despite PMDs being relatively slow, the severity of injuries related to them is no less than those incurred by motorcyclists.



DR TEO LI TSENG, Tan Tock Seng Hospital's director of Trauma Services, on how a large percentage of riders hospitalised had serious injuries.



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