

Kf Seetoh: IPS report harms struggling hawkers & suppliers' business in Tampines, Bishan & Queenstown

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The Makansutra founder said that people were not looking out for the hawkers costs and at the end of the day Singaporeans will know which part of their neighbourhood sells affordable meals. "Don't need a report to warn them, just help guard against rising operation costs, if you can"

SINGAPORE: Mr Kf Seetoh appeared unhappy with a recent report from the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) on food prices in different places in Singapore published in a Straits Times article on Monday (Mar 13).

In a Facebook post on Thursday (Mar 16), the Makansutra founder, who has long championed hawkers, said that the points raised by the report would end up harming "struggling hawkers and their related supplier's business and viability" in certain areas around Singapore.

The ST article, titled "Prata is cheaper in the west while kopi is cheaper in central S'pore: IPS study," included an infographic based on hawker centres, coffee shops and foodcourts in the country's Central, Northeast, West, East and North regions. Bukit Timah was shown to have the cheapest meal on average (\$5.28) and Sembawang has the most expensive lunch meal (\$6.38), with a difference of only a little over a dollar.

Mr Seetoh posted photos of the ST piece, writing "So, these Intelligent People Say (IPS) in this Makan Index that prata (satu kosong, satu telur), in Toa Payoh is cheap (\$2.89) and briyani n Milo in Tampines is expensive at \$14.90...plus West is cheaper and East is jialat."

He then listed his objections to the piece.

"They said \$7.50 for chicken chop is expensive. Hey, It is what it is today. Have you checked food costs n rentals lately?"

He also asked what the point of the article is, nothing that the study's aim had been to survey food prices to better understand cost of living in Singapore.

Mr Seetoh then went on to say that "many common Sinkies" like himself perceive it to mean that eating in Toa Payoh would be more advantageous than at Tampines, Queenstown, or Bishan.

"And in one fell swoop , you harm the struggling hawkers and their related supplier's business and viability in Tampines Bishan and Queenstown," he added.

The Makansutra founder wrote, "If you indeed wanna help Singaporeans keep food expenditure down ..then go cajole your leading policy makers to abort the 'highest bid for public hawker stalls' practice la, plus tell them to stop egging hawkers to sell a meal at \$3 or so. It only helps the well

heed and stingy..Find other ways to support the poor and low waged Singaporeans. It is not the duty of hawkers to do so.”

He also added, “go file some paper and stop this freewheeling market practice of selling public built (turned private) kopitiam at \$40million,” since hawkers are reportedly paying \$12,000 a month for rentals in Tampines.

Last year, it was reported that a Tampines coffeeshop sold for a record \$41.6 million, while one at Yishun sold for \$40 million.

And with this rise in rental prices, Mr Seetoh asked, “Do you know how many plates of chicken chop they need to sell to be viable? You are concerned about people’s food expenses, but deh, who looks after the hawkers cost of doing business?”

He ended his post by writing, “Fact is, in this inflationary times , Singaporeans will know where in their neighbourhood sell affordable meals. Don’t need a report to warn them, just help guard against rising operation costs, if you can.”