



# Surviving tough times with tech

The Covid-19 outbreak is making companies turn to tech to cope with the virus.



By YEE KAR MUN  
lifestyletech@thestar.com.my

PEOPLE have been using technology creatively to cope with circumstances related to the Covid-19 outbreak.

According to a *Sin Chew Daily* report, The Community Pharmacy Map on Google Maps is an initiative by non-governmental organisation Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (MPS) to help the public locate pharmacies across the country that have face masks in stock.

The map has a side panel that lists all the pharmacies in alphabetical order, and pins to show the location of the pharmacies.

The pins are colour coded - red indicates stock is available while yellow signifies it's not.

However, the most prevalent colour is blue which denotes that the status of a store is unknown. According to MPS, the availability will be updated based on feedback from outlets and users around the area.

Users can access the map at this link: [bit.ly/2uWny2l](http://bit.ly/2uWny2l).

But before you rush off to buy a mask, remember to keep your phone and hands germ-free with regular cleaning.

In *The Straits Times*'

report, Singapore Ministry of Health's director of medical services, Assoc Prof Kenneth Mak, was quoted as saying, "Be aware of things you commonly touch. The thing most commonly touched is your phone, so wearing a mask is not the most important thing."

According to the *South China Morning Post*, smartphones can become incredibly dirty, as it's the object people use most often and even tend to take into the washroom.

Also, when people answer calls they tend to bring the phone close to their face, exposing their eyes, nose and lips, which are the entry points for the coronavirus, to infection.

Not only should you keep your smartphone out of unhygienic places such as toilets, you should also regularly disinfect it.

A 2018 study by four researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology claimed that alcohol solutions are effective at getting rid of germs.

Meanwhile, BBC reported that in China people are using a "close contact detector" feature, available on apps such as *Alipay*, *WeChat* and *QQ*, to find out if they have been in contact or close proximity to a person who has contracted or is suspected to have the coronavirus.

To find out, users have to scan a QR code with their phone, and when prompted they must key in their name and ID number.

Each registered phone number can be used to check the status of up to three people the person has been near to without proper protection.

If they did come in close contact with an at-risk person, they will have to take self-quarantine measures and inform local authorities about their status.

To ensure that its couriers do not come in contact with customers, Chinese food delivery company Meituan has launched "contactless delivery".

According to news portal Abacus, once a user orders food through the company's app, the delivery person will drop it off at a designated area.

The company has installed meal retrieval cupboards, for instance, around hospitals for users in the area to get their meals.

It said contactless delivery is being made available in Wuhan first, the city in Hubei where the virus originated, before it's deployed in 184 cities in the country.

China's Education Ministry is also minimising contact through remote learning by broadcasting lessons on TV to help 180 million students "keep learning even with classes suspended".

CCTV News announced that 169 lessons based on the national curriculum covering 12 subjects for junior and senior high school have been uploaded to the national Cloud learning platform.

The national broadcaster said additional materials would be supplemented by teachers as and when needed.

In the same vein, when Kuching-born general practitioner Dr Jerome Liew was asked to address the concerns of Malaysians in China's Sichuan province about the coronavirus, he opted to use WeChat.

The doctor, who works in a hospital in Sichuan's capital city of Chengdu, felt that he needed

to communicate in a way that reduces the risk of spreading the virus.

*The Star* reported that he chose to offer advice via a WeChat chat group started by the Malaysian Embassy officials, which has over 150 Malaysians.

During the one-hour sharing session, Dr Liew posted over 100 voice notes, text messages and materials in the chat group.

However, he admitted that there were some drawbacks to communicating about medical and health information via WeChat.

"I could not see their expressions, so I did not know if they understood me or whether I was going too fast or too slow," he said.

He touched on various topics, including the incubation period of the virus, its symptoms, personal healthcare and vaccine-related matters.

"If you are overseas and you can afford not to come back yet, I would advise you to stay there as long as you can, especially those with children," he said, adding that travelling would only increase the risk.

The session also saw Liew correcting some misinformation participants learned from the Internet.