

**Question:** To ask the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources (a) how many newspaper street vendors have been issued with licences in the past three years; (b) how does one qualify for the licence; and (c) whether there is a quota on the number of licences issued for any one location.

**Answer:**

Street hawking was rife in the early days of Singapore's development. The proliferation of street hawkers, however, posed a risk to public health as the street hawkers lacked proper equipment and amenities such as clean tap water. The lack of a proper waste management system also resulted in waste being thrown indiscriminately which in turn led to environmental pollution and the proliferation of vectors.

2 To address these problems, most of the street hawkers were relocated into purpose-built hawker centres which were provided with essential amenities such as piped water supply, proper sewage connections and bulk bin centres for the disposal of waste. Some hawkers were, however, allowed to continue operating in the streets as their trades were not compatible with those in hawker centres but their activities were strictly enforced to ensure that their stall sites and their surroundings were kept clean at all times.

3 In 1994, street hawkers were licensed in a one-time exercise to control their numbers and no more licences were issued after that. The intention was to phase out these street hawkers through natural attrition and allow such trades to move into proper premises. However, in the early 2000s, the street hawking scheme was reopened as a means to temporarily help those who are needy and less employable tide over their financial difficulties. Today, licensed street hawkers sell items such as newspapers, ice-cream, canned drinks, costume jewellery and phone cards. Out of the 179 licensed street hawkers who sell newspapers, 5 of them were issued their licences in the last 3 years.

4 There are several criteria that applicants must comply with to obtain a street hawking licence. For example, applicants must be at least 45 years of age and be physically fit to conduct their business. Notwithstanding this, NEA will look at each application on a case-by-case basis. While there is no quota on the number of licences for any one location, licences can only be granted with the support of the relevant land agency or Town Council, which designates locations for street hawking activities so as to minimise disamenities to residents and unfair competition to businesses and other stakeholders in the vicinity.

5 Ultimately, street hawking is not a permanent solution for anyone trying to make a living. Those experiencing financial hardship can be better assisted through the various help and job placement schemes available. There are also various Government-funded training programmes for those who wish to pick up new skills and seek more stable forms of employment.