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SINGAPORE - Trying to find a location while on foot can be difficult for the visually disabled. But a student-developed smartphone app could help make it easier for them to find their way.

Called EyeGuide, the app can track a user's location and, by communicating with devices installed at various places, it can verbally update a person about his surroundings and where he is. The app can be controlled by following verbal instructions and swiping the screen of a phone.

EyeGuide also tracks the most popular places the visually disabled visit and the paths they take. By doing so, the app can help building managers "allocate resources to reduce obstacles on (such) popular routes", said third year Singapore Management University (SMU) student Ngo Kee Kiat, 24, who worked on the app.

EyeGuide was one of several student projects showcased on Wednesday (April 13) at SMU's campus. They were developed as part of an Internet of Things course the university introduced in August last year.

The Internet of Things involves objects - such as Web-connected watches, appliances and cars - collecting and exchanging data to help people make decisions.

Associate Professor Tan Hwee Pink, from SMU's School of Information System, said that the university introduced the Internet of Things course to create "enabling infrastructure to build a Smart Nation". The Government has announced plans for Singapore to become a Smart Nation, in which technological solutions are developed to improve the country's future.

Many of the projects for SMU's course showcased on Wednesday had a community focus and aimed to solve problems in society. This included helping the elderly, seafarers and voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs).

One project helps VWOs track the amount of food rations remaining in the homes of needy families. Fourth year student Rodney Tan, 26, said his team's SupplyWatch Web application was developed because "we recognised that there was a gap between consumption and distribution levels of food rations to needy families". SupplyWatch could enable "more efficient distribution of rations", he added.

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Other projects on display included wrist bands that monitor heart rates and skin temperatures of seafarers, and household systems that track symptoms of depression in the elderly.