

Bing, bing - you can track Santa

WASHINGTON, USA: In the battle for Christmas, Microsoft has scored a win over Google as the official maps partner for Santa and his reindeer.

Microsoft announced last week it had sealed a partnership with the Pentagon's North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD), which monitors the skies over Canada and the United States, for the holiday season.

"For more than 50 years, NORAD has helped children around the world track Santa during his Christmas journey and this year Microsoft is partnering with NORAD to make following the big red sleigh easier than ever," Microsoft said in a blog.

"The Santa Tracker tool is built on the Microsoft Windows Azure cloud computing platform and Bing Maps, and anxious kids can even track Kris Kringle on Windows Phone and Windows 8 apps."

The news marked a coup for Microsoft, whose Bing search engine is struggling to catch the Google juggernaut. Google had been the NORAD tracking partner since 2007.

"It's a pretty big win for Microsoft and should give its products greater exposure, though I'm kind of sad that NORAD Tracks Santa is now developing into a service that corporations are clearly fighting over to sponsor," said Danny Sullivan of Search Engine Land, a blog which follows the firms.

"But I love the service and if it helps support it, cool," Sullivan said.

NORAD's Santa tracking tradition dates back to 1955, when a Colorado newspaper advertisement printed a phone number to connect children with the jolly man in the red suit, but that mistakenly directed them to NORAD's hotline.

To avoid disappointing the little ones, NORAD's director of operations at the time, Colonel Harry Shoup, ordered his staff to check the radar to see where Santa might be and update the children on his location.

Google is not completely shut out for Christmas, however. It has an Android app on its Google Play store which allows mobile users to follow Santa too.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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