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Helping seniors to utilise technology



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BY ELGIN CHONG - JANUARY 27

SINGAPORE — While technology can be of great help to senior citizens, many do not know how to make the best use of it since they find it too complicated.

At an engagement session involving about 60 seniors yesterday (Jan 26), five focus groups were formed to gain an insight into their needs in areas such as getting to places easily and living healthy lives — in order to get a better understanding of how technology can be deployed to fulfill such needs.

Jointly organised by the Smart Nation Programme Office (SNPO) and RSVP Singapore, the engagement is aimed at ensuring that there is no digital divide as the

country moves towards becoming a smart nation — one which encourages citizens to utilise technology and smart solutions to improve their lives.

Participants involved in the focus groups expressed their qualms about how current technologies were too complicated to use. Some suggested one-touch smartphone applications that can direct them to their needs and services, such as directions and locations of nearby healthcare centres.

One of the participants, retiree Dora Lim, 67, said she often has difficulties finding her way to her destination, and current technologies, such as Google Maps, are troublesome to use.

“When I use Google Maps, I still have to check my current location and indicate it before (Google Maps) directs me to my destination,” added Madam Lim. “I hope that there will be an app that directs me to where I want to go with just one touch, and that it will tell me what to do when I’m lost. ”

Environment and Water Resources Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, who was also present at the engagement session, noted that there may be seniors who are more isolated or unaware of technological advancements.

“What we need to do now is to systemically reach out at the community level to (these seniors),” said Dr Balakrishnan, who is also Minister-in-Charge of the SNPO.

“The outreach has to be on the ground, through grassroots and non-governmental organisations like RSVP Singapore. We’ll continue to work with these organisations to reach out more effectively to the seniors,” he added.

Asked what can be done to reach out to seniors who are less connected, RSVP Singapore President Koh Juay Meng said: “We will have separate engagement sessions to teach the seniors how to use a smartphone. It’ll also be a challenge to reach out to illiterate seniors, but we will need gadgets that are senior-friendly such that they can use it by pressing only one or two buttons, and that it’s more picture-oriented.”

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