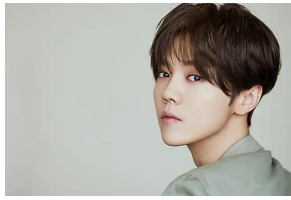
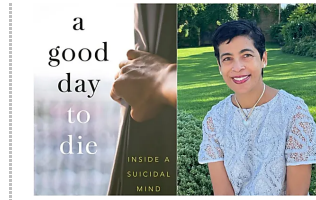


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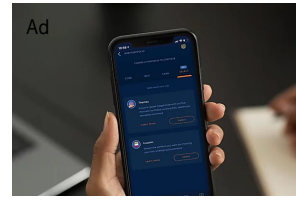
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## East Coast GRC to help underprivileged, less savvy residents go digital



(From left) East Coast GRC MPs Maliki Osman, Jessica Tan, Heng Swee Keat and Cheryl Chan at the launch of the East Coast Digital Blueprint. PHOTO: EAST COAST GRC



Wong Shiying

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SINGAPORE - A slew of digital initiatives, including a laptop donation programme, will be rolled out to residents of East Coast constituency to help the underprivileged and the less savvy stay abreast of tech adoption.

Launched on Saturday (June 19), the East Coast Digital Blueprint aims to broaden access to equipment like computers, improve the digital literacy of seniors and help heartland businesses expand their online presence.

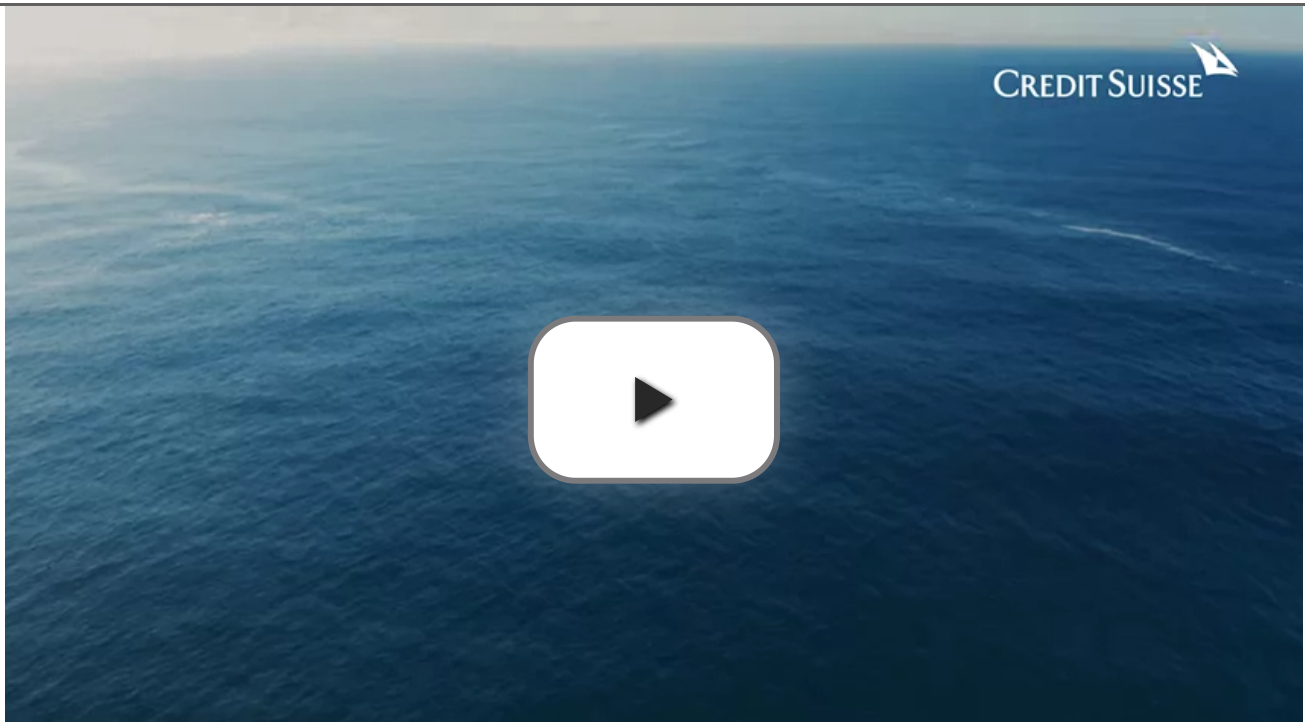
One of the initiatives involves providing low-income families with donated computers. Before the computers are given away, volunteer group SG Bono will repair the devices and spruce them up.

SG Bono will also set up a booth at community hub Heartbeat@Bedok for residents to get their laptops repaired for free or donate them.

The booth will be open every second Saturday of each month, starting from July.

The laptop donation drive complements the Infocomm Media Development Authority's NEU PC Plus initiative, which provides low-income households with students, or people with disabilities, subsidised computers and broadband services.

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Unveiling the blueprint, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat, who is an MP and grassroots adviser of East Coast GRC, said the pandemic has brought out the importance of going digital.

"From the comfort of our home, we can attend lessons, hold meetings and do workouts... (But) we can do this only if we have the right skills and tools," he said.

Elaborating on the blueprint, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Maliki Osman, Minister of State Tan Kiat How, Ms Jessica Tan and Ms Cheryl Chan - the other East Coast GRC MPs - spoke about various programmes the constituency will introduce.

To get seniors acquainted with messaging apps and medical teleconsultation services, workshops will be held by volunteer group Heartware Network and grassroots organisations.

There will also be workshops for students and seniors on how to stay safe from cyber bullying, fake news and scams.

To introduce schoolchildren early to the digital sphere, there will be workshops to teach them how to use Google functions and design applications.

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On the business front, government agency Enterprise Singapore and the Federation of Merchants' Associations Singapore will organise weekly advisory clinics to help heartland shops and small- and medium-sized enterprises expand their online reach.

Through these sessions, shop owners can also seek advice on their business troubles and learn how to apply for grants.

Mr Tan said many heartland businesses are keen to adopt technology to meet the needs of customers online.

"For example, collaboration with online delivery platforms like Tada has helped wet market stallholders at Block 216 Bedok Market and Food Centre go online to serve existing and new customers during Covid-19 times," he added.