

## **Encourage Citizens To Be More Active Online**

*My Paper Viewpoints (July 4, 2011)*

I READ with interest Ms Rachel Chan's article, "Engaging the tech-savvy with e-Govt Masterplan" (my paper, June 21). As new-media platforms become more accessible and interactive, it is imperative that the Government customises online public services.

Having a one-stop portal for access to publicly available government data and e-services would definitely increase convenience for citizens.

Beside providing services, such as allowing users to check traffic conditions, active citizenry on the Internet should be given more credence and recognition. As Singaporeans spend more time on the Internet, many have come to rely on online websites and commentaries to remain updated on current affairs and community issues.

The high level of activity on the citizen-journalism website Stomp has the potential to translate into more constructive discourse on socio-economic issues and encourage a more involved and engaged population.

This can be facilitated in a number of ways. First, online articles should be maintained and updated, especially those relevant to topical issues.

Second, the authorities could expand the functions of the official feedback channel Reach, or Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home, and make it more inclusive, productive and attractive.

Third, online policy groups can be created to gather like-minded individuals to provide discourse on a range of concerns, from health care to the cost of living.

The opportunities for virtual engagement in Singapore are diverse and vast. If the Government does not seize the opportunity to involve Singaporeans online, feelings of apathy may unfortunately continue to manifest.

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