

# KERATAN AKHBAR

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## Hoping for Padu to be holistic

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THE government has come up with the national Central Database Hub (Padu), a system for collating individual and household profiles of citizens and permanent residents in the country. In the words of Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli, it is a "single sign-on" for government services.

Ultimately, we are told, Padu's purpose revolves around leveraging comprehensive data to inform policy decisions, enhance the accuracy of subsidy distribution, and ensure fair social protection programmes.

While I have nothing against the plan to collate data, I wonder why the information cannot be extracted from the existing systems in the hands of the government.

Looking at the sections that people will need to fill when they sign up, I have observed that there is no request for information on the health of the individual. This information could be vital, more so given that our population is ageing by the day.

Recently, I applied for the RM100 eMadani credit after being prompted by my bank's app on my phone. The reply was almost immediate: "You do not qualify based on your income tax record until May 2023."

And why May 2023, you might ask? That's because I have been unemployed since then, something that was completely disregarded in the analysis. So, even the sum of RM100 was denied me.

Until today, I have not received

a single sen in any form of assistance from the government. Even my children who obtained straight As in their exams were deemed unworthy of any scholarship, and we had to fork out our own money for their tertiary education.

Earlier last year, my employer had to suspend the business (which explains the non-payment of income tax after May 2023) and there was a rush to get aid from Socso under the loss of income plan. But those who are over 60 and still working were told that we did not qualify for any help from our social security organisation.

I spoke to one of the Socso officers who, while he sympathised with me, could only say that this is the current policy.

Is this what we get after contributing to Socso for so many years?

My late sister met a similar fate when appealing to Socso for medical aid after being hospitalised. Her request was met with an outright refusal based on the reason that she was working after attaining the age of 60. Being punished for trying to eke out a living after 60; is this how a caring government deals with the elderly?

Not all retirees are government servants who have free medical treatment for life. Many of us are in the private sector where not only do we not have benefits after retirement, but even if we continue working, it is usually on a no-frills contract. I hope Padu will give due con-

sideration to this category of citizens (the elderly) based on the fact that many are only able to meet the needs of day-to-day living and would be unable to meet sudden demands that befall them due to illness or some other unforeseen circumstances.

Any plan to assist the people should not be on a hand-to-mouth basis.

Rather, with the wealth of information that should be gathered by Padu, I hope there can be a holistic approach that will ultimately benefit all the citizens especially in their time of need – in the true spirit of Madani as espoused by the unity government.

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