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GEORGE TOWN: Being blind and single, Lawrence Anthony Samy was waiting for a Good Samaritan to help him register for the Central Database Hub (Padu) before the deadline.

However, none came until a friend rang him at the 11th hour and brought Lawrence, 59, to a makeshift centre at SJKC Chong Cheng in Sungai Ara to register.

"I am glad I was able to register even though it was on the last day.

"I lost my eyesight due to glaucoma about 30 years ago and I rely on aid from the Social Security Organisation (Socso) of RM850 monthly.

"Fortunately, my friend called me and brought me to the physical counter here to register," said Lawrence.

It was also a case of better late than never for thousands who turned up at such centres in different locations in Penang to fill up their details with the help of officers from the Statistics Department.

The SJKC Chong Cheng centre saw a stream of registrants arriving right after the centre opened at 9.30am yesterday.

Penang Statistics Department director Khalrol Nizam said within the first 90 minutes of opening, some 300 people had registered.

"We had set up 30 counters at this school in anticipation of a large crowd for last-minute registrations.

"As of March 30, some 608,000 people in Penang, or 48.4% of the eligible adult population, had registered for Padu," he said.

Office administrative staff member Tan Meng Jie, 30, was among those who turned up at the school to help her parents and aunt, all in their 70s, register.

"Earlier, I helped my dad register online, thinking that it was on behalf of the family, but only later did I find out that my mother and aunt had to register individually.

"So, I brought all of them here to complete their registration," she said.

Bayan Baru MP Sim Tze Tzi, who visited the centre, said the droves of people who arrived to register showed that the people were supportive of the government's initiative.

Sim said there was a misconception among the people, especially non-Malays, who felt they would not be entitled for help, which was among the reasons why they did not register.

"The government needs to make it clear that the system not only benefits the B40 income group, but also those in the M40 group," he said.