

KERATAN AKHBAR

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NST Leader: Middle class worries about Padu



The middle class' suspicion and scepticism of the Central Database Hub (Padu), which is to become the arbiter for subsidies, is merited and misplaced. - NSTP/ASWADI ALIAS

THE middle class' suspicion and scepticism of the Central Database Hub (Padu), which is to become the arbiter for subsidies, is merited and misplaced.

Security vulnerabilities, bothersome registration, privacy overexposure and more starkly, a feeling of futility, are legitimate concerns that deter the mostly Middle 40 and Top 20 income groups from participating.

In response, the government has given its assurance that Padu is reinforced on international standards and best practices, while the information it collects and hardware it uses are protected by the Official Secrets Act and the Computer Crimes Act. Like any

new system, teething problems kick in as millions of registrants (10.6 million at the last count) converged on the database, especially last-minute entrants, though the questionnaire accompanying the registration could have been simplified.

As for that rebuke that registering means "stripping yourself naked", where every detail is revealed is, unavoidably, the nature of such a system to measure and appraise net worth as units of eligibility. Granted, its method of collating information is a privacy consideration but also academic.

For generations, Malaysians have surrendered their privacy to a long list of government keepership: MyKad, passport, income tax declaration, driver's licence, vehicle registration and business permits. Then there's privacy handed over in a bank account, credit and debit cards, bank loan, credit worthiness and insurance. Malaysians also yield personal details to social media via computer apps, news and shopping portals. To think that these privacy particulars are discrete and do not "bounce" on each other is naive.

"Sharing is caring" is the online mantra. The government, corporations, banks and major tech companies know everything about you, even if you think you've never divulged anything about yourself. In any case, not registering is irrelevant: basic data is automatically keyed in, thanks to link-ups with the National Registration, Immigration, Inland Revenue and Road Transport Departments.

To avoid Padu's reach, Malaysians must live an anti-social existence. Their only proof of existence and citizenship is a birth certificate and a MyKad. Here's the tricky part: the middle class are discouraged because they think that they aren't eligible to earn the subsidies, a depressing experience that permeated during the Covid-19 pandemic when repeated applications for financial aid were rejected despite the desperation.

Nevertheless, the government countered that it is possible that Padu, now with a comprehensive and more accurate database, can make a course correction for middle class registrants to get subsidies. To further deconstruct the misconception and woo detractors, Padu's registration should be a perpetual exercise instead of a deadline.