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Consumer groups give thumbs up to Padu initiative

By Daniel Ahmad, Ainun Jariah - January 2, 2024 @ 6:00pm



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KUALA LUMPUR: Consumer groups have endorsed the government's new Central Database Hub (Padu) for its myriad benefits, streamlining subsidy distribution and providing targeted support for citizens.

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) chief executive officer T. Saravanan suggested the public start updating their data in Padu due to its potential in helping vulnerable individuals to enhance their lives.

He said, if people update their information and get real data into Padu, the government can streamline such information and eliminate leakages as a more targeted approach can be taken.

"The data is already there from the Inland Revenue Board (IRB), Social Security Organisation (Socso), Employees Provident Fund (EPF), and so on.

"So based on that data, they know how much income you are actually getting and it will be analysed and based on the analysation, they will come up with what type of subsidy you really deserve or whether you deserve a subsidy at all," he told the New Straits Times.

Saravanan, however, emphasised the need for expanded outreach in rural areas to facilitate the registration process for the Padu system.

"Now, of course, when you want to register for Padu, you need connectivity, internet access, or even gadgets for people to go and assist you in the registration process.

"But how about this vulnerable group, the elderly group which doesn't have internet access or even gadgets or computers for them to update?

"Therefore, more activities must be conducted in rural areas so that people, particularly those in vulnerable groups, can register through this system," he said.

He said he hoped the programme would not be discontinue in a few years as it should be an ongoing initiative for the foreseeable future.

"Malaysians do not want to see one day suddenly they say Padu is not useful and waste the resources the government has invested to build this system.

"As a country progresses, it is crucial to maintain programmes (though perhaps, if needed) with a more focused approach... we would like to see a more targeted approach so that those who are really vulnerable get the subsidy or support from the government."

Saravanan also urged the government to focus on educating individuals who oppose the Padu system, emphasising its targeted approach.

He pointed out that the system's ability to gather accurate data enables the government to channel aid and subsidies more effectively to those who truly need them.

Meanwhile, Consumers Association of Penang president Mohideen Abdul Kadeer echoed Saravanan's sentiments, underscoring that the introduction of Padu will contribute to the exclusion of individuals ineligible for targeted subsidies.

This is attributed to the system's ability to provide a more precise representation of annual incomes of families.

He said that with the consolidation of data from various sources, each family can be better profiled for a fairer distribution of targeted subsidies.

Nevertheless, he acknowledged that there might be glitches in the implementation.

"We cannot eliminate possibilities of glitches in the implementation, but the plan has to start somewhere, and problems have to be addressed.

"Our concerns revolve around reaching the poor and those in isolated areas without internet or media access or bank account have to be reached via conventional means because they are the most vulnerable group.

"There will be anticipated problems because these people may not even be in the statistics as they may not have a bank account or a proper job," he said.

He emphasised that Padu needed to streamline when problems are identified since it is a platform for targeted subsidies.