

# Better public service ICT needed

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Saturday, 19 Jun 2021

SINCE the first movement control order period in March 2020, we've experienced, among other IT issues, the International Trade and Industry Ministry website crashing not once but several times; the spotty multimillion vaccine registration website where information sometimes goes missing; and so on.

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From a citizen-user's perspective, all this has made me question the government's ICT (information and communications technology) capability. We are well into the digital age and even digital adoption laggards are being forced to learn digital skills to survive. Schools are online, businesses are online, meetings are online, yet I feel that Malaysia's use of ICT in public service delivery is sadly below par.

During my short experience working in government service I witnessed many malfunctioning projects that required ICT expertise. I am sure many of my friends in public service would concur with me but avoid doing so because they don't want to step on any toes.

Mampu (the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit) in the Prime Minister's Department needs to buck up. Under Budget 2021, the amount allocated for Mampu was RM134,442,000, slightly higher than the amount for the National Security Council, which is RM112,177,300.

Furthermore, there needs to be some central database for basic information so that we do not need to fill in such information again and again for the simplest of transactions. Of course, the immediate concern is data protection; however, there are ways this can be addressed. For example in Singapore, GovTech, the government's IT agency, launched MyInfo, authenticated through Singpass, to act as a digital personal data platform helping citizens fill in digital forms automatically instead of doing so manually and repeatedly for every service.

It should be noted that MyInfo is not a centralised repository that stores user data in a common database, and that it is safeguarded by cybersecurity measures, including a combination of end-to-end encryption and multi-layered security.

It was great when then Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan launched the "One Service, One Delivery, No Wrong Door" policy for the civil service in 2008, meaning a customer must be served in the most efficient and cordial manner and not made to run around regardless of which door is opened.

Yet today I am sure we have all had our fair share of calling a government department and either:

- > No one picks up.
- > The person who can help is on leave/at a kursus/in a meeting/etc, etc.
- > Or we're told, sorry wrong department/ministry, please call 12345678.

Of course, I know of very helpful officers who went out of their way to help me solve an issue, and I am very grateful to them. However, the three situations above are much more commonly experienced.

I hope that the civil service can work on reinforcing the "No Wrong Door" policy to improve public service delivery in Malaysia.

Is any of this important now that we are in the middle of a pandemic? Of course! Many of us regular citizens are frantically trying to make sense of fast-changing policies during this period and we need more than pdf files and social media posters to do so. We need an effective Public Sector ICT Technical Committee to keep up with the times and provide us with accurate information in an effective, timely and simple manner in these chaotic times.

JOYCE  
Kuala Lumpur



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