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MyKad for newborns

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FOR the benefit of those who haven't yet heard this particular piece of news, all newborn babies will be provided with MyKad, a lifelong identification document and a personal database, along with birth certificates, beginning Jan 1 next year.

This was stated by National Registration Department (NRD)'s director-general Datuk Azizan Ayob as a follow-up to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's announcement in his Budget 2003 speech.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said the Government will be issuing MyKad for all newborns starting from next year, in tandem with efforts to widen the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in the country.

The initiative will certainly provide a push for and be a significant contributor towards the goal of having all Malaysians to possess MyKad by 2005. It is predicted that with all citizens' data on the same system, there will be less "hassle of filling up forms when dealing with Government agencies and the private sector".

However, there are several concerns that come to mind with regards to implementing MyKad registration for newborns.

For one, the mechanics will be quite tricky; if it were to be within the first few weeks after birth and the child has to be present at the respective NRD office, logistics would be quite challenging as the mother would still be in confinement and the child is too small.

Secondly, the usual procedure for getting a MyKad goes as follows: get a queue ticket and wait for the number to be called; verify information and thumbprint (which is captured by a biometrics system); and have a photograph taken digitally. Now, unless there are special provisions made for babies, the situation could become quite awkward.

Thirdly, there is the issue of how the image looks on the respective MyKad. I, for one, feel that all babies look almost, if not all, alike at the beginning and that their looks change almost every day progressively. So, there is a possibility that the picture on the MyKad for newborns would need updating every so often.

Finally, there is the question of when the use of birth certificate will apply and when MyKad utilisation starts as the newborn concerned will be issued both.

Azizan has assured that NRD is finalising the details of implementation, which is said to include provisions enabling the registration of a child's inoculation and schooling details. Dr Mahathir, in his Budget speech, had also said the NRD would be provided with sufficient staff and equipment as well as mobile units to meet the registration needs in rural areas.

Let's just hope everything will be smooth sailing and that the project will progress as intended and reach its goal.