

## LEADER

## DATA PRIVACY

## Personal is no longer private

It is time the authorities brought errant data users, traders to book

**I**F you have received a telephone call from someone claiming to be an agent of a bank or from Bukit Aman, then you are not alone. Countless others have been on the unfortunate end of the phone. To the authorities, the callers are scammers, but that is an escapist's answer. If they are indeed scammers, how did they get access to personal details such as MyKad numbers and bank accounts? The details are too convincing. And fear-inducing, too. Are these callers scammers, is not the right question. Instead, one should ask: How did these callers get access to our personal data? This question leads to further questions: Who is giving them access to the data? Are they being sold? Are data users such as banks, telecommunication and marposer companies trading them? According to an article on one website, our personal data are allegedly being sold for bitcoins. The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) said in a statement on Friday that the agency and police are investigating the allegation.

**Have data users taken steps to ensure the security of our data? Who is policing them? The people need answers, not just advice.**

This is not only invasion of privacy, but also theft, pure and simple. The scary thing is personal records contain our names, addresses and mobile phone and MyKad numbers. Just imagine the list of potential abusers of data entities involved in communications, banking and finance, insurance, healthcare, hotels, transport, education, direct selling, services, real estate, utilities and others. We do not need lawyers to tell us that selling and reselling is not the "commercial" purpose for which the personal data was provided to companies under the Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (PDPA).

It is time the authorities brought errant data users, data processors and other traders to book. Fines and imprisonment are the only answer. Otherwise, the PDPA will lose its long arm, and bite, too. The PDPA is built on principles of protection and security, and we provide our personal data with confidence that these principles will form the foundation for the data to be supplied. Because non-compliance will be punished, we are encouraged to provide them. One of the principles is the requirement that the data user obtain the consent of the data provider if such data are to be used for any other purpose. The data provided can only be processed for a purpose directly related to the "commercial transaction" we are entering. Trading our personal data for bitcoins is not the purpose for which we provided our personal information to, say, a telco. Lawyers will tell us that the PDPA imposes obligations on the data user to do all they can to protect personal data during processing from any loss, misuse, modification, unauthorised or accidental access or disclosure, alteration or destruction. Sometimes, data processing is outsourced to third parties by the data user, but one would think the same duty to protect will apply. Have data users taken steps to ensure the security of our data? Who is policing them? The people need answers, not just advice.

## RURAL INDUSTRIES

## PM: USE DIGITAL TECH OR BE LEFT BEHIND

Entrepreneurs must market products worldwide creatively, says Najib

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**T**HE new economy needs more aggressive, dynamic and creative ventures that help rural entrepreneurs earn their place on the global supply chain, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said here yesterday.

He said without creativity and innovation driving consistent output, rural entrepreneurs would be left behind as the world shifted towards the digital industry.

"We need to maximise digital technology to ensure our place on the global supply chain," Najib said at the launch of the Rural Entrepreneurs Carnival at Putra World Trade Centre.

Present were Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, his deputies, Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi and Datuk Ahmad Jazlan Yaakob, and Sabah Chief Minister Tan Sri Musa Aman.

Najib said rural-based small- and medium-sized industries



Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob with award recipients at the launch of the Rural Entrepreneurs Carnival in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY MUHD ZAABA ZAKERIA

had, during the 10th Malaysia Plan, contributed 33.4 per cent of the gross domestic product, 17.3 per cent of exports and 57.8 per cent of human resource supply.

"This shows that we need to establish our footing on the global supply chain to grow and remain competitive."

He said rural entrepreneurs needed to develop their creativity in marketing products to the global market.

"It is the digital age, and this in

the new normal, where products are moved on the global supply chain by cashless means and even without human contact.

"It is all digitised, and we need to be able to deal this way."

"These are skills that can be learnt and developed, so you must learn them and develop yourselves."

He said in the 2017 Budget, the government allocated RM10.4 billion to drive rural industries, adding that the amount would likely increase in the 2018 Budget.

## 'INFO FOR SALE'

## MCMC probing Lowyat.net report on data breach

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The authorities are looking into a report that databases with personal data of millions of Malaysians are being put up for sale.

The report, titled "Personal data of millions of Malaysians up for sale, sources of breach still unknown", was published yesterday on the Lowyat.net forum.

The report was removed two hours later at Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission's (MCMC) request.

The commission said it was working with police to investigate the claim.

"MCMC and police are investigating reports that these were

advertisements of the personal data for sale, suspected to be obtained illegally."

"As a preventive measure, MCMC ordered the administration of Lowyat.net website to remove the article. The website administrator has removed the advertisement and the article."

The commission urged all parties not to speculate until investigations were completed.

Lowyat.net had claimed that it received a tip-off that someone was selling huge databases of personal details of Malaysians in what they said was one of the country's biggest data breaches. It included 50 million data on-

tries from various telcos, which allegedly included customer names, billing addresses, mobile numbers, SIM card numbers, phone models and MyKad numbers. Lowyat.net believes that the data breach took place between 2012 and 2015.

Also for sale were 17 million rows of customer information allegedly from a job portal. The data comprised names, login names, hashed passwords, email addresses, nationality, addresses, and mobile phone numbers and were believed to be obtained in 2012 and 2013.

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