

# More can be expected of govt data, communication

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

That the Government is trying different means to “simplify information and provide as much information as possible to the people” is encouraging. (“Govt trying out various platforms to reach out: Chuan-Jin”: Oct 11)

But whether Singaporeans have adequate access to information is not necessarily about the supply or presentation of it. The Government can point to quantitative data on Statistics Singapore, its fact-checking site *Factually* and parliamentary speeches by ministers.

In question is the utility of such information. Earlier this year, Mr Zainal Sapari, Member of Parliament (MP) for Pasir Ris-Punggol, did not get exact percentages from the Ministry of

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Education concerning the pay grades of school leaders and principals.

Along the same tangent, MP Png Eng Huat asked for specific figures about the employment obligations of foreign students, yet the ministry did not disclose the number of defaulters.

For charities and non-profits to better track the efficacy of their endeavours, there have been calls for more data to plug gaps in the Household Expenditure Survey and *Com-Care* reports.

Researchers from the Lien Centre for Social Innovation and the Singa-

pore Management University School of Social Sciences reflected that the Average Household Expenditure on Basic Needs is not easily available in the public domain.

Communication of existing information can be strengthened. Everyone has opinions on the mainstream issues of transport, education, culture and heritage, for instance, but has less clarity over complex policies.

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The *Our Singapore Conversation* process started with promise and ended with fanfare, so it is a shame that not much has transpired thereafter.

With the Manpower Minister’s acknowledgement that the Government could do better in its outreach efforts and is trying out different platforms and formats, as different people relate to information in different ways, more can be expected of its commitment to information and communication.