

## **Abdul Rahman: Data openness vital for rapid development**

**BY Andrian Chan** | Wednesday, 14 June 2017

KUALA LUMPUR: Government ministries and agencies will be compelled to share their data under a review of the Statistics Act 1965.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Dahlan, who said this, stressed that data openness was vital for rapid development in Malaysia.

"Malaysia has a very open stance on the usage of data, but it is the legal framework which prevents the respective ministries from doing so," he said.

"That is why the Statistics Department has been asked to identify the challenges in the sharing of data between government agencies and the private sector," he told reporters after the launch of World Bank's Malaysian Economic Monitor here yesterday.

Abdul Rahman said he did not mind sharing his ministry's data with the Department of Statistics.

"There are some concerns on privacy and security. This can be tackled by the Government," he added.

He said there may be attempts by certain people to manipulate data which gave the wrong impression of the economy and tailor-made to their own interests. But, he insisted the benefits far outweighed the risks.

The Chief Statistician of Department of Statistics, Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin, said the department was working closely with the Attorney-General's Chambers to review the Statistics Act 1965.

"We are going to empower the Department of Statistics to conduct data coordination. The Act is quite old. That is why we have to look at a total review," he added.

Once the Act is amended, Dr Mohd Uzir said ministries and even the Inland Revenue Board would be compelled to provide a more detailed form of data to the department.

"For example, the Health Ministry will give us data on how many doctors are there. But we want to know their experience; how many years have they served? What is their education background and their mean salary?

"Certainly a doctor with 10 years of experience would be different from one who has only served for five years," he said.

Dr Mohd Uzir explained that there were laws preventing certain ministries from disclosing personal data.

But he believes that data can be “anonymised” or made anonymous for the benefit of the department.

“We are not interested in who they are, but we want to know, for example, how many people living here have an income below RM5,000. Statistics is colour blind,” he said.