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Editorial Correspondence should be addressed to

Editor-in-Chief,
Journal Statistics Malaysia,
Department of Statistics, Malaysia,
Level 8, Block C6, Parcel C,
Federal Government Administrative Centre,
62514 Putrajaya, Malaysia.

Business Correspondence for subscriptions should be addressed to

The Secretariat,
Research & Development Division,
Department of Statistics, Malaysia,
Level 4, Block C6, Parcel C,
Federal Government Administrative Centre,
62514 Putrajaya, Malaysia.

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FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EDITOR

Official statistics provide the numerical basis for making decisions on national development. As noted in the first article entitled '*The Role of Statistics in Factual-Based Policy-Making*', good statistics serve decision-making at two points, viz., for analysis at the policy formulation stage, and in monitoring progress at the different phases of implementation of the corresponding development plans.

A real challenge in implementing a development programme is the need to reconcile and accommodate the concerns of the various parties. Besides the proposals submitted by those competing to gain from the amount allocated, it is essential for the government to consider the views of the target group and members of the public who will be affected by the particular project.

Hence, before going ahead with the construction of a new toll highway, as highlighted in the second article entitled '*Tolled Highways: Review of Public Opinion Surveys*', the government requires two separate reports on public perception towards the project. A report is to be submitted by a consultant engaged by the selected concessionaire, while the other report will be based on an opinion survey conducted by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia. The two independent studies are intended to ensure fairness and transparency in the decision-making process.

Compared to a macro-level analysis, the more specific micro-level study presented in the third article provides more direct linkages between problems and potential remedies. The article entitled '*Study on Outpatients' Waiting Time in Hospital University Kebangsaan Malaysia Through the Six Sigma Approach*', describes the application of project management and statistical tools to relate the main research problem to its causes, each of which leads to specific proposals. Based on the findings, the study recommends measures to shorten the time for registration, improve the doctor-patient ratio and increase the number of staff at the counter.

While acknowledging the need for situation-specific studies, producers of official statistics should not lose sight of the *big picture* or the *helicopter view* required by their stakeholders to address national development issues. Basically, the intention is to serve the long-term common good. Issues of this nature were discussed at the National Statistics Conference, 2005, and abstracts of the papers presented are included in this issue of *Statistics Malaysia*.

Achieving a national development goal warrants wisdom in decision-making. In order to comprehend the various issues involved, it is ethically imperative to make full use of all available facts and figures. Due consideration should also be given to the less quantifiable forms of intelligence. Having gained a reasonable insight into the total perspective, the wise decision-maker is then said to possess a sense of the way that situations usually turn out.

AZIZ @ FIKRY MOHAMMAD

CHIEF EDITOR

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