



## Govt wants federal, private agencies sharing more data

Nawar Firdaws | June 13, 2017

Big data is here to stay, says Minister in the PM's Department Abdul Rahman Dahlan, saying with detailed info, better policies can be formulated.



KUALA LUMPUR: Putrajaya is looking to review the Statistics Act 1965 to compel federal and private agencies into providing detailed information that can assist the statistics department with its data collection process.

These agencies include the police, Inland Revenue Board, and Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, among others.

“We’re going to look at a total review of the Act. The purpose is to empower the department in terms of data coordination, because the current Act is quite old,” chief statistician Mohd Uzir Mahidin said.

He was speaking at a press conference after the launching of the Malaysian 16th Economic Monitor here, today.

According to Uzir, the information shared, once compiled and analysed by his department, will help these agencies along with companies from both the public and private sectors to plan and track their progress.

He said although the federal and the private agencies have been sharing their aggregated data with the department, still more would be needed from these agencies in terms of in-depth statistics.

“If they only give the aggregated data, we can only know the forest, but not the individual trees in the forest.

“And we already know the forest. Now we want to see the trees so we can know what kind of trees they are,” he added giving an analogy to describe the lack of details in the data provided by these agencies so far.

These statistics would then be made available to the public, although details of individuals would be kept private, he said.

Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Abdul Rahman Dahlan, who is in charge of the economic planning unit, who was at the event, said these data are needed to help the country develop further.

He said Malaysia is currently in the best position to fully utilise all the information they will and have already obtained.

“We’re just lacking in the legal framework, and that’s why the statistics department has been instructed to identify the various challenges (in data collection), not only among government agencies, but also from the private sector.

“For us to move forward, we need data compilation, data sharing, data manipulation, and ways to use them in a more refined way.

“Big data is here to stay.”

Rahman added that once the Act has been amended, there may come a time where the public would have access to statistics at the district levels.

“Wouldn’t it be interesting to start talking about unemployment rate of your own district rather than the national unemployment rate?”

This in turn, would provide local governments with intelligence to form more relevant policies, he said.

As for privacy and security concerns, Rahman said the government will look into ways to share the data it collected, in a responsible manner.

But the agencies involved must feel comfortable with having these data shared, and realise that the benefits far outweigh the risks, he said.

“Because right now there are attempts by some quarters, to manipulate the data they have and give the wrong impression on the economy.

“And I believe with these data, we will have a better understanding of the economy.

“In fact, with more data available, the public will be able to create new businesses based on the data collected.”