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DOSM encourages youths to become data scientists

DOSM ENCOURAGES YOUTHS TO BECOME DATA SCIENTISTS

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Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli (centre) together with Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) Chief Statistician of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin (third from right), and invited guests at the launch event of Economic Census 2023 held at Sasana Kijang, Bank Negara Malaysia.—KAMARUL ARIFFIN/The Star

WITH data science becoming more specialised, the skills data scientists need to meet the demands of industries are evolving.

Data scientists need to have deep domain knowledge and an extensive range of analytical skills, as they are responsible for collecting, analysing and interpreting data to help decision-makers to make informed decision in organisations.

Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) chief statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin urges members of the younger generation with a "critical mind" to venture into the field of data science.

"The key pillar of data scientists is the critical mind – having curiosity.

"You become the people who adopt critical thinking. You actually see what the issues and problems are, and try to solve them.

"If you have that characteristic or possess those criteria, you go on to become data scientists. You can build your interests and acquire the skill sets. To be the true data scientists, you need to practise, you need domain knowledge of the particular industry," he said.

He explained that: "They put the data in their proper, meaningful and more structured [context], and it is not just coming up with the numbers, The data needs to be strong to have their stories that have to be conveyed together with some policy recommendations."

He said: "You can learn the basic thing on your own, but when you go to the intermediate level or the advance, you can enrol in a specific programme", and that "opportunities for our youngsters are huge."

He highlighted that data scientists are considered valuable to firms, "With a good data scientist, you can manage consumers, products and competitors. A data scientist can connect the dots and sometimes come up with proposals in the short term, middle and long term."

Speaking to *The Star* after the launch event of Economic Census 2023 held at Sasana Kijang, Bank Negara Malaysia, Dr Mohd Uzir said DOSM has over 50 data scientists.

It has taken the initiative to create a data scientists' community through its collaboration programme with SAS Institute to produce many recognised data scientists for the requirement of the country.

Under the SAS-Certified Data Scientists programme, nine data scientists had completed their studies in 2018, 10 on March 22 last year, while another 28 prospective data scientists had started their studies in October 2022.

"We are now ready to bring the system to a new level and look forward to provide this service to other government agencies," he shared.

Asked if DOSM have any plans to collaborate with any other international bodies to produce skilled data scientists, he said, "Yes, I think we look at the way the world we live in now, we are very interconnected."

He added that DOSM also actively participates in programmes with other countries, such as South Korea and Netherlands, that are in the forefront for data scientists.

He also said that DOSM was well recognised in Asia for establishing statistics systems and provides consultancy on their expertise in the area.

Asked on the role of data scientists in relation to the economic census, he said that they could use their capabilities for data mining and discovery from the information available from the economic census.

"They can make a value creation from whatever raw data being gathered from the economic census. The role of data scientists goes beyond the conventional simple analysis," he pointed out.

The economic census, which covers all business establishments and non-profit organisations in Malaysia, will include all economic sectors, namely agriculture, manufacturing, construction, mining and quarrying, as well as services.

This census aims to collect information on organisations for the reference year 2022 and will take place between April 1 and Sept 30, with 1,400 part-time officers employed for the task.

"I predict that the data will be able to help show how a micro enterprise can move forward to be small and medium enterprises, or from medium to large enterprise if we extend market opportunities."

He said as micro enterprises move up to a higher scale, the space is open for newcomers to take over.

He explained that DOSM intends to observe activities of micro enterprise that aim to become business entities but operate in more personalised way. "With the data, we can offer financial aid, courses on business techniques through the SME Corp," he said.

Meanwhile, Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli said they are targeting 1.2 million organisations registered with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM) to take part in the economic census, saying that the information would be the basis for the formulation of government policies.

"This is because one of the challenges is that 95% of the existing enterprises are considered as micro (75.2%) and small (20.5%) enterprises," he said.

He added that the data would help show the breakdown and the types of enterprises.