

E-bidding to minimise 'human interference'
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The government has announced yet another online procurement portal in its battle against corruption.

Calling it an 'e-bidding' portal, Minister in Prime Minister's Department Idris Jala said that the portal should "enhance transparency in the procurement process".

Speaking to reporters after unveiling the Economic Transformation Programme's six Strategic Reform Initiatives (SRI) in Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre this morning, Idris however indicated that there is still a long way to go before its implementation.

Idris (left) said that the government will have to amend several laws, as well as reviewing the current business practices within the government.

"It is still dependent on the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) processes.... Once we clear all the processes then the e-bidding will be automated," he said, adding that the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (Mampu) will be overseeing this initiative.

The director for this SRI, Aziayah Baharudin, also said that e-bidding will see "less human intervention" since the bids for government tenders will be automated.

However, she offered no details as to how the system will work with the various factors involved like the technical capabilities of the company and whether the company is bumiputera-owned or not.

According to the Performance and Management Delivery Unit (Pemandu), the threshold value for quotations and tenders via e-bidding has also been reduced from RM200,000 to RM50,000.

Rationale behind threshold

But when asked the rationale behind the threshold instead of doing away with it, and making all bids automated through the e-bidding, Idris said that there still has to be a value to the bids.

"If not, even people who want to sell one pencil to the government will have to go through e-bidding.

"But if the system is successful and everyone uses it, then maybe we will bring the net down, that is, if it makes sense to lower the threshold," he said.

He was also unable to comment when asked if it would be similar to past government initiatives such as e-perolehan and the 'MyProcurement' website launched by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (right) in April last year.

"No, I'm not familiar with e-perolehan," he said.

According to the irregularities found in the 2006 Auditor-General's report, the government had paid exorbitant amounts to supply tools to eight National Youth Skills Institutes (IKBN) around the country.

Among them were RM224.94 for a set of four screwdrivers, RM10,700 for a set of ten technical books, RM5,741 for a two-tonne car jack and a 3.1 megapixel digital camera bought for RM8,254.