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## Sex, drugs add RM53b to UK economy

**LONDON:** The inclusion of illegal activities such as prostitution and drugs into national accounts would add about £10 billion (RM53 billion) to national output, Britain's statistics office said on Thursday.

In a paper in which estimated prostitutes' "sales" and costs incurred — condoms and "working clothes"— the Office of National Statistics (ONS) said the inclusion of such activities was part of a raft of improvements to the way the economy would be measured from September.

The adjustments brought Britain's estimates of national economic output more into line with other European countries, where some activities such as prostitution or the trade in certain drugs are not illegal.

The ONS estimate of illicit revenues were based on 2009 data, the latest it said were available, and could bolster debate for the reform of drug and prostitution laws.

Prostitution itself is not illegal in Britain but activities surrounding the trade such as keeping a brothel are prompting critics to call for an overhaul of what they see as muddled rules.

Similarly, calls have mounted in Britain for the partial legalisation of some drugs to curb the crime associated with prohibition and also to boost tax revenues.

"As economies develop and evolve, so do the statistics we use to measure them," said ONS Chief Economic Adviser Joe Grice.

The statistical body said estimating revenues and costs incurred in

illicit activities had been difficult, and that they had based some assumptions on data from other studies or from police figures.

Statisticians estimated that there are 58,000 prostitutes in the country seeing up to 30 clients each week, and assumed that the only drug produced in Britain is cannabis.

Overall, adjustments to the way Britain's national accounts were reviewed, included revenues from non-profit institutions, which would have boosted 2009 GDP by between four and five per cent.

"Other illicit activities that could be included in future accounting were the handling of stolen goods, illegal gambling, and the copying of software, games, movies and music," the ONS said. **AFP**