

29/7/2011

Local

Census finds majority of firms not willing to divulge info

Barnard Yaang

KOTA KINABALU: The Department of Statistics only managed to get a 16 per cent response from the 40,000 foreign firms and businesses operating in Sabah in its Economic Census (BE2011) since the commencement of the census early this month.

Its Sabah Deputy Director, Anuran Othman, said this is probably due to most firms and business operators being unwilling to divulge their financial information.

"They are afraid that the detailed information they give us would be used for income tax purposes," he told a press conference, Thursday.

On this, he stressed that the census is strictly conducted under the provisions of the Statistics Act 1965 (Revised 1989).

He said the Act clearly stipulates that the contents of the questionnaires are treated as very confidential and no other entities, including individuals, or the Inland Revenue Board could gain access to the businesses' financial information.

He said the Department of Statistics would only provide cumulative figures in the final publication of the outcome of the census in June next year.



Anuran (right) and Shukor displaying previous copies of the economic census.

given to us to anyone, even to individuals," he said.

Hence, Anuran hoped that the firms and businesses would render their cooperation and support so that the questionnaires would be fully completed by the respective proprietors.

He said it is also to ensure that they achieve quality data and timeliness so that the proprietors could use the contents of the publication for good planning to expand their businesses.

According to him, the last Economic Census was carried out in 2006 for reference year 2005 while data on SMEs collected through a Baseline Census of Establishments and Enterprises was conducted in 2006 for reference year 2005.

He said some 110 officers have been asked to carry out fieldwork directly to obtain information from the 40,000 business entities in Sabah.

"Data obtained from this economic census would be used to obtain comprehensive information on the structure and profile of the economic sector, data that would be used in the formulation of national development plans and economic policies," he said.

Anuran said the data would also be used as a benchmark for the compilation of National Accounts as well as to provide an up-to-date frame for the Central Registrar of Establishments in the Department of Statistics.

"In addition, data on SMEs obtained from the census would provide an updated database on SMEs as well as to monitor and evaluate the contributions of SMEs to the overall economy," he said.

SMEs, he said, currently contribute about 30 per cent to the gross domestic product. He said one of the important stages of the data is "access to financing" where the government could identify the financing sources of each establishment and the factors contributing to the failure in financing and which sectors require financing assistance.

The census, he said, would be conducted through mail enquiry, interview and field enumeration.

There are 52 questions in the questionnaires he said.

Should the respondents have any inquiries, he said they could also contact the department at 088-664630/464643 or email at banisikond@stats.gov.my

Also present was Assistant Director, Mohammad Shukor Mat Lazim.