

Rural folk prove more helpful to census workers

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KUALA LUMPUR: Rural people are more cooperative than those living in towns or cities in their response to the national census.

National Statistics Department director-general Datuk Wan Ramlah Wan Abd Raof said rural folk would tell census workers of the whereabouts of their neighbours or what time they were expected back. "This makes it easier for our officers."

She said people in the urban areas kept to themselves and rarely gave out information on their neighbours.

"This makes our job harder, especially when it involves people living in condos or apartments."

Wan Ramlah said some Malaysians answered all the questions, except the one on their income, apparently for fear of having income tax officers



Datuk Wan Ramlah Wan Abd Raof says data won't be shared with other government departments

knocking on their doors.

"Some are afraid the information might be given to a third party or someone might cheat them while others are eager beavers."

She said the answers would be used

to work out the average household income and would not be used to target individual household members.

Wan Ramlah said most foreigners, especially Indonesians, were responsive to all the 51 questions in the census, although some of those in the country illegally appeared afraid.

She said information given for the census would not be revealed to any third party as the officers were under oath to maintain secrecy. The data would not be shared with the police or any other departments, she added.

Wan Ramlah said census workers were now interviewing rural folk in the interiors of Sabah and Sarawak.

This was a daunting task as they had to use boats or four-wheel-drive vehicles to go to these places. "It's challenging. But we intend to cover each and every home in Malaysia."

The census workers have covered 2.5 million homes since July 6. They have until Aug 22 to finish the job.