

It's time to be counted!

After more than four years of preparations, the Statistics Department has come up with several ingenious ways to ensure that no Malaysian will be left out in the coming national Population and Housing Census, which rolls out only once every 10 years, writes **TAN CHOE CHOE**



Statistics Department chief statistician Datuk Wan Ramlah Wan Abd Raof hopes Malaysians will give their full cooperation to the census drive

NO excuses accepted. Everyone must and will be counted in the 2010 Population and Housing Census (Banci), which will kick off on July 6 and end on Aug 22.

To ensure that this is achieved, the Statistics Department's chief statistician Datuk Wan Ramlah Wan Abd Raof says a drop-off and pick-up (Dopu) census kit and an e-Census form will be introduced.

The department has already identified certain areas in major towns across the country where the people will be given the kit.

The kit, which will be put in a double-layered plastic bag for protection against the elements, will be sent to 1,500 enumeration blocks. (One enumeration block consists of between 80 and 120 homes). This means the kits would be used to canvass between 120,000 and 180,000 homes in the country.

"Most who refused or somehow did not participate in the previous censuses are urbanites who are often not at home during the day.

"This time, they can fill up the census form on their own, put it back into the bag, hang it outside the gate, call our enumerator and it will be picked up," Wan Ramlah said.

But there is a time limit attached to this option — once you receive the kit, you will have to fill up the

form within three days.

For those who prefer to tinker on the computer than talk or pick up a pen, they can participate in the census online at www.statistics.gov.my.

"Just ask our enumerators for a PIN (personal identification number) when they come by your house. With the PIN, log on to the website and key in your email account. A password will be sent to your email and with that you can log on to the e-Census form."

She hopes Malaysians will take to this just as they have taken to e-filing for their annual income tax.

To reduce data-entry errors, every filled form will be electronically scanned instead of being keyed in manually, as in previous censuses.

"We will use an intelligent character recognition machine to scan the questionnaires. We hope this will also speed up the release of data."

Five more questions have been added to the census questionnaire this year, bringing the total to 51.

"They include the mode of transport to work, computer literacy, monthly household income, migration for the last one year, and specifically for the women of Sabah, Labuan, and Sarawak, their age when they first marry and number of children borne."

The last question is necessary



for Sabah and Sarawak because of the lack of reliable birth and mortality data, especially in the more remote areas, unlike in the peninsula where every birth and death is quickly registered with the National Registration Department.

"Because of the distance and the mountainous range of the two states, this data has always been lacking. So, once we get the data, we will know for certain the actual fertility and mortality rates of residents there."

These new questions were added in after intensive discussions among government agencies and departments to determine its needs.

"Because of changing patterns of households, occupation, and migration, we have to ask more questions."

"A lot of important studies can be done from the data collected," adds deputy chief statistician Dr Abdul Rahman Hasan.

The questionnaire is divided into four parts:

- location/living address;

Every nook to be covered

TO undertake the massive task of canvassing the estimated 29 million people around the country, 29,000 temporary staff — 3,000 as supervisors and 26,000 as enumerators — will be hired by the Statistics Department.

They will be canvassing residents in about 75,000 enumeration blocks or about 7.5 million estimated living quarters. Every space, area or structure that houses people will be visited.

"Even if it is a homeless man living under a bridge or an addict living in an abandoned building, we will cover them," says the department's chief statistician Datuk Wan Ramlah Wan Abd Raof.

But her department cannot manage everything so it will "solicit the help of the state secre-

tariats, plus other government agencies like the Information Ministry, the Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing Ministries, the Department of Orang Asli Affairs, as well as the Federal Special Task Force on illegal immigrants in Sabah".

The help of these agencies are vital — especially in ensuring that the enumerators can reach and communicate properly with different ethnic and dialect groups.

Once recruited, everyone will go through one-week intensive training of 10 hours per day.

They will learn how to read maps, the terms and concepts used, how to ask questions, dressing, manners, and to observe certain safety measures.

To become an enumerator, the

minimum qualification is SPM. A supervisor will need to be at least an STPM or diploma holder.

"Because of the nature of work that they have to do, possessing their own transport is a key preference and the ability to speak some local dialects," says deputy chief statistician Dr Abdul Rahman Hasan.

A supervisor can get up to RM72 a day, including allowance, while an enumerator can get up to RM53. The department also reimburses mileage claims to compensate the volunteers.

Wan Ramlah cautions of individuals who are out to cheat the public by claiming that they were conducting the census on behalf of the department.

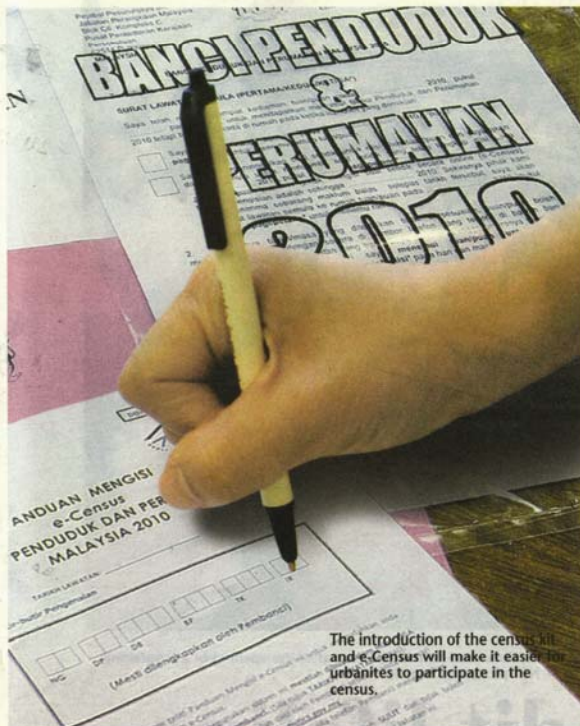
"Please be wary of these im-

posters. Our enumerators will carry an ID-card with their picture and a serial number on an orange lanyard."

Once the results come in by Aug 22, the department will take over and check the quality of the census by selecting some random samples.

"Once we ensure that the coverage is complete, we will check for inconsistencies. If there is any, we will go back to the interviewee or do some scientific estimation," says Abdul Rahman adding that so far, this margin of error has been negligible.

"Proper mapping, training and sufficient publicity in all previous censuses have ensured that we get pretty good and accurate information."



The introduction of the census kit and e-Census will make it easier for urbanites to participate in the census.

- type of living quarters and the amenities available therein;
- household particulars, including the relationship with the head of household;
- personal particulars of each individual residing there, including level of education, occupation, literacy, gender, age, and ethnicity.

An estimated 29 million Malaysians are to be canvassed, including non-citizens who have been in the country for six months or more.

This is different from censuses done before 2000 — where anyone who happened to be in Malaysia during the census period had to participate, irrespective of their citizenship or tenure in the country.

"It's called the de facto approach. Even a visitor who was here for a day was part and parcel of the census."

"But as Malaysia becomes an increasingly mobile country, the United Nations has advised us to move towards the *de jure* approach — to count only people who have been here for at least six months, to give us a better picture of the country and its residents."

The questionnaire has also been translated into the dialects of Ibans in Sarawak and Kadazans in Sabah. It is also available in Korean and Japanese.

"Everyone must take part in the census. Please understand that the current development of the country is a result of the statistics that were gathered previously. So, the next state of development will be based on this census."

"If our data does not reflect a true picture because of your unwillingness to cooperate, then the policymakers will not be able to formulate good



Deputy chief statistician Dr Abdul Rahman Hasan says five new questions will be added to the census questionnaire

policies to drive the nation," adds Wan Ramlah.

With the help of new technology and better planning, it is expected that the preliminary data of the 2010 census — at least on how many people have been surveyed — would be released by November.

Interesting facts:

- The earliest census was introduced by the British in the 1800s in the Straits Settlements.
- The first census of the peninsula was in 1911.
- Since the formation of Malaysia in 1963, there have been four censuses — 1970, 1980, 1991 and 2000.

What do you think? Send your views to nsunt@nst.com.my

More women recorded as divorcees

MEN are more likely to remain single than women, the past four censuses conducted by the Statistics Department have shown.

An average six out of 10 men were found to be single in the census years of 1970, 1980, 1991 and 2000.

In the same years, only four out of 10 women were single.

The percentage of people who opted to tie the knot has remained largely the same in the 30 years between 1970 and 2000.

There were about 60.16 per cent listed as married in 1970, 57.89 per cent in 1980, 59.43 per cent in 1991, and 59.75 per cent in 2000.

Malaysians who marry young, as indicated by the percentage of those

who were listed married at between the ages 15 and 19, have also gradually decreased through the years.

These youngsters made up about 3.24 per cent of married couples in 1970, 1.84 per cent in 1980, 1.14 per cent in 1991, and further declined to 0.74 per cent in 2000.

Interestingly, the number of divorcees in the population has declined.

Divorcees made up 1.29 per cent of everyone aged 15 and above in 1970.

Apart from a slight increase in 1980 (1.40 per cent), it went down to 1.01 per cent in 1991.

By 2000, the rate had dropped further to 0.82 per cent.

But it is interesting to note that

while the percentage of divorcees was almost equally divided between men (41.17 per cent) and women (58.83 per cent), that ratio changed drastically in 2000 — significantly more women (75.06 per cent) than men (24.94 per cent) were recorded as divorcees.

Meanwhile, the number of Malaysians who were left widowed had also decreased, from 7.22 per cent in 1970 to about 4.42 per cent in 2000 — a significant drop of 38.78 per cent.

It seems that women have always made up a larger percentage of those widowed — 79.55 per cent in 1970, 81.78 per cent in 1980, 82.68 per cent in 1991, and 81.06 per cent in 2000.

CENSUS FINDINGS

MARITAL STATUS	1970			1980			1990			2000		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Never married	1,040,321	739,572	1,779,893	1,541,057	1,217,717	2,758,774	2,165,984	1,661,873	3,827,857	2,903,219	2,266,219	5,169,438
Married	1,680,750	1,736,939	3,417,689	2,235,986	2,326,319	4,562,305	3,238,196	3,335,086	6,573,282	4,384,108	4,438,510	8,822,618
Widowed	83,829	326,115	409,944	81,872	367,594	449,466	94,897	452,977	547,874	123,762	529,631	653,393
Divorced / Permanently Separated	30,254	43,236	73,490	26,682	83,931	110,613	26,554	85,693	112,247	30,140	90,687	120,827
TOTAL			5,681,016			7,881,158			11,061,260			14,766,276



Source: Statistics Department Malaysia

Some died in accidents, sexually harassed in line of duty

URBANITES are more suspicious of strangers and rural folks are friendlier, according to the Statistics Department.

For some, the suspicion is so deep that they send out dogs to greet anyone who rings the doorbell.

"They don't like strangers or they don't want to spare the time so they hope to chase us away," says deputy chief statistician Dr Abdul Rahman Hasan, adding that rural folks tend to be easier to talk to.

"They just ask when 'bantuan' (aid) will come," says Rahman.

Many of us often take statistics for granted, not realising that it was gathered from the efforts of many, some of whom even died in the process.

"Some staff got into motor accidents... yes, there were casualties.

Accidents happen so we make it a point to ensure the temps purchase group insurance, which will cover them up to a year."

Wan Ramlah admits that some staff were also sexually harassed, "but mostly just some wolf-whistling".

"Our people will have to talk to drug addicts, criminals, and sometimes, unknowingly, even the mentally unstable."

"If an area is deemed unsafe, we advise them to go in groups. If it is a single male in the house and the enumerator is a female, she is advised to conduct the interview at the gates," says Wan Ramlah.

"If it is a male staff and there is only one woman in the house, he is not advised to go in either," adds Rahman.

As provided in the Census Act 1960, everyone has to cooperate in the cen-

sus, after which they must allow the enumerator to pin up the 'census listing card' outside their home.

"Anyone who refuses to provide information or knowingly provides false information can be charged up to RM100 or jailed up to six months, or both," says Wan Ramlah.

So far, no one has been prosecuted for such an offence.

This same act also states that an enumerator must not provide the information collected to a third party. If caught, the offender can be fined up to RM2,000 or a jailed up to one year, or both.

For more information, call 1800-88-7828 or email bancic2010@stats.gov.my.

Also browse the department's Facebook page under Bancic2010_census2010 for updates.