

IN COMPUTER TERMS, IT'S GARBAGE IN GARBAGE OUT (NEW STRAITS TIMES, 28 JULY 2010, LETTERS, PAGE 18)

We refer to the letter "In computer terms, it's garbage in garbage out" (New Straits Times, 28 July 2010, page 18) and are concerned with the feedback raised by the writer.

The enumerators appointed by the Census Commissioner's Office were given seven days detailed training on understanding the questions, concepts and definitions, communication skills, matters on attitude and etiquette while meeting with the respondents and other matters pertaining to the census. The enumerators were also reminded on the importance to strictly follow all the census procedures and guidelines. There are 51 questions in the census questionnaire. Enumerators are required to ask all of the questions during their visits. They have been instructed and trained to go through and ask all the questions in the sequence/order as printed in the form for every person in the living quarters. Although there are 51 questions, only those which are relevant and pertinent to the particular household will be asked. Some questions will be posed through observations.

As a main government agency on official statistics, the issue of data quality has always been given high priority. In this context, certain steps are undertaken by the Department to ensure high quality census data, among others are:

- a. all questionnaire will be scrutinised for completeness and consistency and in addition, quality checks will be undertaken to ensure that data collected are of quality; and
- b. prior to the last two weeks of the census completion date (22 August), a special survey will be carried out to evaluate the quality of the data obtained during the census.

The Department takes this matter seriously. We regret that the enumerator had failed to adhere to census procedures and guidelines. Action has been taken against the enumerator while the area mentioned by the writer had been revisited.

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