

Press release

LCQ9: Safety of Census officers during visits to households

Wednesday, July 13, 2011

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, in the Legislative Council today (July 13):

Question:

The 2011 Population Census is now underway. It has been learnt that some young female Census officers have been arranged to enter the flats of responding households alone to conduct questionnaire surveys. As each long-form questionnaire takes around 40 minutes to complete, these Census officers are worried about their personal safety, and their family members have the same concern. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether Census officers are allowed under the guidelines of the authorities to enter the flats of responding households alone to conduct the survey; if so, of the reasons for that; if not, whether the authorities will expeditiously rearrange the Census officers to conduct the surveys in pairs and make sure that the arrangement concerned will be implemented?

Reply:

President,

In view of the fact that census questionnaires cover data of individual households and persons, the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) normally will not deploy two enumerators to conduct face-to-face interview with the same household to ensure confidentiality of the information gathered. This is consistent with the established arrangement for other surveys conducted by C&SD. However, under special circumstances where C&SD considers that it is safer for enumerators to work in pair having regard to the situation of the concerned quarters and its surroundings, C&SD will deploy two enumerators to work as a team to visit the same unit of quarters and conduct interview.

To ensure personal safety of enumerators, C&SD has incorporated appropriate coaching in its training courses to raise the safety awareness of enumerators, including the deployment of suitable precautionary measures. Moreover, C&SD has set up field centres in each district during the census period. Supervisors at the field centres will closely monitor the work progress and itineraries of enumerators and deploy three to four enumerators to work in the same building to ensure the safety of enumerators. Meanwhile, C&SD has informed the Police, property management companies and village representatives, etc. of the census operation so that they can make appropriate arrangements, including the surveillance for the safety of enumerators.

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