

**DILUSHI WIJESINGHE**

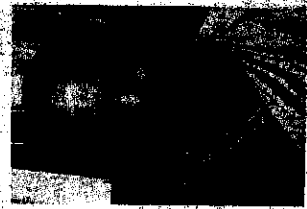
The long overdue enumeration process of the Census of Population and Housing (CPH) is yet to see its completion. The process was expected to be completed by December 19, the official "Census Date".

"We planned to carry out the census in 2021, but despite challenges like Covid, the economic collapse, cyclone Fengal, and floods, nearing the completion of the census is a big victory for us," said Anoja Seneviratne, Director General of the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS).

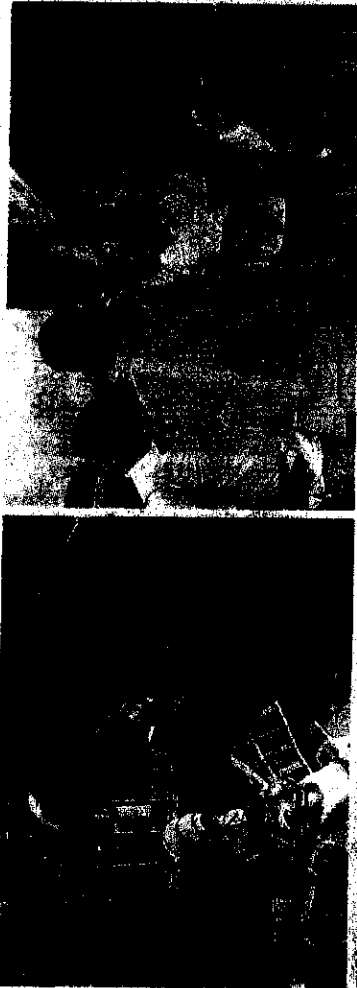
She says that information has been collected for 23 districts, and even areas yet to be fully completed have been addressed at the divisional secretariat level.

However, some residents in multiple areas told *Sunday Times* that their homes have not been visited. Some said the enumerators collected data thoroughly by spending about 45 minutes at their homes, while others mentioned that the enumerators only checked the electoral list and asked two to three questions. Others also said that the enumerators filled forms themselves, while some asked the residents to fill the forms and return them the same day on their behalf.

**Anoja Seneviratne  
Pic by Priyanka  
Samaraweera**



# Population and housing census dragging slowly to a belated close



Talking count: Census department officials take down information for them to collect data," she added.

She highlighted other logistical issues as well. "There weren't enough tablets to collect data, so some enumerators used their personal devices, but there are specific requirements," she highlighted.

She also added that in some economic zones, people occupy makeshift dwellings

which are small rooms inside large buildings, making them unavailable during the day. "We had to visit them at night, and even in areas like the port," she said.

The department is preparing to provide a summary of the census to the Minister-in-Charge, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake. "Another publication with key findings will be presented by March or April, with the final report expected to take about seven to eight months," she noted. In addition, another post-enumeration survey will be conducted, along with the release of thematic reports.

Meanwhile, the household income and expenditure survey has begun to monitor poverty. Last conducted in 2019, it will continue till December to account for seasonal consumption patterns.

In some cases where the DCS received information that enumerators had not performed their duties properly, re-enumeration was conducted. "There's no official system to monitor as we have about 35,000 enumerators, but regular checks are being done," Ms. Seneviratne said. A separate team was assigned to enumerate large places such as hospitals, prisons, and even the dispossessed.

The Director General acknowledged gaps in the enumeration process, as many enumerators were also involved in flood relief efforts. However, she says the elections did not pose an obstacle. "We obtained statements from the enumerators that they would work independently," she noted.

Urbanization in Colombo over the past 12 years and changes in lifestyles have made data collection challenging, Ms. Seneviratne said. "People spend less time at home, and enumerators found themselves visiting certain homes multiple times. Enumerators say that people's responses make it challenging