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KUALA LUMPUR, AUG 3 (BERNAMA) -- THE DEWAN RAKYAT TODAY APPROVED WITHOUT ANY CHANGE THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BILL WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS PROVIDES FOR INCREASE OF SEATS IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT AND STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES.

A TOTAL OF 136 OF THE 145 MEMBERS OF THE DEWAN RAKYAT VOTED IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL. THE NINE DAP OPPOSITION MEMBERS VOTED AGAINST.

AMONG THE SUPPORTERS OF THE BILL ARE INDEPENDENTS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARTI HIZBULMUSLIMIN (HAMIM).

THE HOUSE ALSO REJECTED A MOTION BY OPPOSITION WHIP ENCIK LIM KIT SIANG (DAP-KOTA MELAKA) SEEKING TO REFER THE BILL TO THE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE BEFORE APPROVAL.

IN WINDING UP THE DEBATE, PRIME MINISTER/DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD REFUTED AN ALLEGATION BY THE OPPOSITION LEADER THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN ARBITRARY IN AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION.

HE SAID THAT BECAUSE OF THE NEED TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO PROVIDE FOR MORE SEATS IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT AND STATE ASSEMBLIES, THE GOVERNMENT ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO AMEND OTHER SECTIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION WHICH WERE NOT CLEAR. -- MORE 1910/ZCM

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EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND LEADING TO THE MOVE, HE SAID THAT LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION OF RESIDENTS OF RURAL AREAS HAD BEEN NEGLECTED SINCE THE COLONIAL PERIOD.

REPRESENTATIVES TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AT THAT TIME WERE APPOINTED FROM AMONG URBAN RESIDENTS WHO DID NOT BOTHER MUCH ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF THE RURAL POPULATION, HE ADDED.

AFTER THE COUNTRY GAINED INDEPENDENCE, THE GOVERNMENT FOUND THAT THE ANOMALY PERPETRATED BY THE COLONIALISTS FOR OVER A HUNDRED YEARS NEEDED TO BE RECTIFIED.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID RURAL PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES WERE HARDER TO LOOK AFTER THAN URBAN PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES.

FOR INSTANCE, THE LIPIS CONSTITUENCY IN PAHANG WAS AS BIG AS THE STATE OF NEGERI SEMBILAN, HE ADDED.

IN DETERMINING THE LARGENESS OF CONSTITUENCY, THE POPULATION DISPERSAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL CONDITION WERE ALSO TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT APART FROM THE SIZE OF THE ELECTORATE. -- MORE 1930/ZCM

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HE POINTED OUT THAT TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION ONLY SIZE OF THE ELECTORATE WOULD MAKE RURAL CONSTITUENCIES TOO LARGE.

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE RESTRUCTURING OF CONSTITUENCY DELINEATION WOULD NOT RESULT IN ANY OVERLAPPING OF DISTRICT BOUNDARIES TO AVERT ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS.

ON A PROPOSAL BY ENCIK NG CHENG KUAI (BN-LUMUT) THAT CONSTITUENCY AREAS BE DIVIDED ACCORDING TO A RATIO OF 60:30:10 (MALAYS: CHINESE: INDIANS), THE PRIME MINISTER SAID DIVISION OF THE ELECTORATE ALONG SUCH LINES WAS +VERY DANGEROUS+.

IT WOULD AFFECT NATIONAL UNITY AND CONFLICT WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, HE SAID.

ON THE REQUEST BY THE BARISAN NASIONAL MEMBERS FROM KAPIT, BUKIT MAS AND LAMBIR FOR INCREASE OF ELECTION CONSTITUENCIES IN SARAWAK, HE SAID THIS WOULD BE GIVEN FAIR CONSIDERATION DURING THE REVIEW IN 1985. -- MORE 2043:0M

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ON A SUGGESTION BY DATUK LEONARD LINGGI JUGAH (BN-KAPIT) THAT NUMBER OF JUDGES AND MAGISTRATES IN SARAWAK BE INCREASED, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE PRESENT NUMBER WAS SUFFICIENT.

THE DELAY IN HEARING OF CASES WAS NOT DUE TO SHORTAGE OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS BUT TO FAILURE OF THE PARTIES INVOLVED TO PRODUCE NECESSARY WITNESSES AS WELL AS TO APPLICATIONS FOR POSTPONEMENT OF CASES.

EARLIER, ENCIK GHAFAR BABA (BN-JASIN), IN REPLYING TO POINTS RAISED BY THE DAP OPPOSITION MEMBERS DURING THE DEBATE ON THE BILL, SAID THEIR STATEMENTS WERE CALCULATED TO DAMAGE THE GOODWILL EXISTING BETWEEN THE RULERS AND THE PEOPLE AND AMONG THE COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTRY.

HE CENSURED THE DAP FOR ATTEMPTING TO FAN COMMUNAL SENTIMENTS BY ACCUSING THE GOVERNMENT OF WANTING TO INCREASE MALAY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH THE AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION. -- MORE

2047/0M

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HE SAID THE DAP ATTITUDE WAS A DANGEROUS ONE WHICH COULD LEAD TO THE COMMUNAL INCIDENTS OF THE COUNTRY'S PAST.

ENCIK GHAFAR ALSO LASHED OUT AT THE DAP FOR SAYING THE ELECTIONS COMMISSION HAD NOT BEEN FAIR AND JUST IN CARRYING OUT ITS RESPONSIBILITIES BECAUSE IT WAS PURPORTEDLY INFLUENCED BY THE RULING PARTY AND ITS CHAIRMAN WAS AT ONE TIME A MEMBER OF UMNO.

ENCIK LIM LIANG SENG (BN-KINTA) HOPED THE RE-DRAWING OF ELECTION CONSTITUENCIES PROVIDED FOR PROPER COMMUNAL COMPOSITION IN THE INTERESTS OF NATIONAL UNITY.

HE FELT THAT SMALLER CONSTITUENCIES, ESPECIALLY IN THE RURAL AREAS, WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICES TO THEIR CONSTITUENTS. -- BERNAMA 2050/0M