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KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 3 (BERNAMA) -- A BILL PROVIDING FOR A JAIL TERM OF UP TO THREE YEARS AND FINE OF UP TO \$20,000 FOR BOTH FOR ANYONE INVOLVED IN THE PUBLICATION OF FALSE NEWS WITH MALICIOUS INTENT WAS TABLED IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT TODAY.

UNDER THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE PRINTING PRESSES AND PUBLICATIONS ACT 1984, THOSE WHO CAN BE PROSECUTED ARE THE PRINTERS, PUBLISHERS, EDITORS AND WRITERS OF SUCH REPORTS OR ARTICLES.

CLAUSE 4 SECTION 8A OF THE PRINTING PRESSES AND PUBLICATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, WHICH PROVIDES FOR THIS, WAS CREATED FOLLOWING MANY FALSE REPORTS PUBLISHED IN BOTH LOCAL AND FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES LATELY, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID WHEN PRESENTING THE BILL FOR SECOND READING.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT APPEARED THE PRESS AND MAGAZINES INVOLVED WERE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FALSE REPORTS FOR THOSE MADE +VICTIMS OF THEIR ACTION+ OR THE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE SECURITY AND ECONOMY OF THE NATION. -- MORE

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HOWEVER, PROSECUTION UNDER SECTION 8A CAN ONLY BE INITIATED WITH THE CONSENT OF THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR.

SECTIONS 8B AND 8C OF THE CLAUSE PROVIDE FOR THE COURT TO ORDER THE SUPPRESSION AND SUSPENSION OF THE PUBLICATIONS UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS.

UNDER SECTION 8B, THE COURT, ON APPLICATION BY THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR, CAN ORDER THE SUPPRESSION OF THE PUBLICATION FOR A PERIOD NOT EXCEEDING SIX MONTHS WHERE ANY PERSON HAS BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF ANY OFFENCE IN RESPECT OF ANYTHING PUBLISHED THEREIN.

SECTION 8C EMPOWERS THE COURT, ON APPLICATION OF THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR, TO ORDER THE SUSPENSION OF SUCH PUBLICATION PENDING THE FINAL DISPOSAL OF ANY APPEAL AGAINST THE CASE IN RESPECT OF ANYTHING PUBLISHED THEREIN.

BESIDES THE CLAUSE 4, THERE WERE FOUR OTHER AMENDMENTS, COVERING CLAUSES 2, 3, 5 AND 9, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID. -- MORE
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CLAUSE 2 SEEKS TO DELETE THE WORDS +OR RENEWED+ SO AS TO DO AWAY WITH THE NOTION OF RENEWAL OF LICENCE. THIS MEANS THE VALID PERIOD OF A PERMIT IS THE PERIOD AS STATED IN THE PERMIT.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID A PERMIT HOLDER WAS REQUIRED TO APPLY FOR A FRESH PERMIT AFTER EXPIRY OF THE VALID PERIOD.

CLAUSE 3 WAS CREATED TO GIVE ANOTHER GROUND TO THE MINISTER TO BAN THE PRINTING, SALE, IMPORTATION, DISTRIBUTION OR POSSESSION OF A PUBLICATION IF THAT PUBLICATION CONTAINED MATTERS LIKELY TO ALARM PUBLIC OPINION, HE SAID.

UNDER THE PRESENT REGULATION, THE MINISTER CAN MAKE SUCH ORDERS IF HE IS SATISFIED THE CONTENTS OF A PUBLICATION ARE PREJUDICIAL TO PUBLIC ORDER, MORALITY, SECURITY, PUBLIC OR INTERESTS OR AGAINST THE LAW.

THE FOURTH AMENDMENT, UNDER CLAUSE 9, IS AIMED AT CREATING SECTIONS 13A AND 13B AND IS RELATED TO THE DECISION OF THE MINISTER IN REJECTING, REVOKING OR SUSPENDING A LICENCE OR PERMIT. -- MORE
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SECTION 13A PROVIDES FOR ANY DECISION OF THE MINISTER IN THIS MATTER NOT TO BE CALLED IN QUESTION BY ANY COURT WHILE SECTION 13B IS AIMED AT DELETING ANY PROVISION FOR ANYONE TO BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD REGARDING HIS APPLICATION FOR A LICENCE OR PERMIT.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE MINISTER WAS GIVEN ABSOLUTE POWERS IN THE MATTER BECAUSE OFTEN THE INFORMATION RECEIVED BY HIM IF MADE PUBLIC COULD HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE SECURITY AND INTERESTS OF THE NATION.

IF THE DECISION WAS MADE A COURT CASE, THE OPEN HEARING WOULD TURN THE COURTS INTO A POLITICAL ARENA, HE ADDED.

IF THE MINISTER ABUSES THE POWER GIVEN HIM, THE PEOPLE CAN ACT AGAINST HIM THROUGH THE DEMOCRATIC CHANNELS PRACTISED IN OUR COUNTRY, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID. -- BERNAMA

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