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KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 4 (BERNAMA) -- THE DEWAN RAKYAT TODAY APPROVED THE PRINTING PRESSES AND PUBLICATIONS BILL (AMENDMENT) 1987 AFTER A TWO-DAY DEBATE.

THE BILL, TABLED BY PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD YESTERDAY, IS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, AIMED AT OVERSEEING THE USE OF PRINTING PRESSES AND PUBLICATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC ORDER AND NATIONAL INTEREST.

IT ALSO EMPOWERS THE HOME MINISTER TO APPROVE, REVOKE OR SUSPEND A LICENCE OR PERMIT BECAUSE OF CERTAIN REASONS OR CAUSES.

SPEAKING DURING THE DEBATE ON THE BILL AT COMMITTEE STAGE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE OBJECTIVES OF TABELING THE BILL WERE CLEAR AS OUTLINED BY HIM YESTERDAY.

IN REPLY TO DATUK SHAHRIR SAMAD (BN-JOHOR BARU), DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IF ANY WORD IN THE BILL WAS NOT CLEAR, IT SHOULD BE INTERPRETED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AIMS AS CLARIFIED BY THE MINISTER. -- MORE

2047MST 04 12 A7  
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B E023 AAE  
PARLIAMENT-PRINT 2 KUALA LUMPUR

+THERE MAY BE WORDS IN THE BILL WHICH CAN BE INTERPRETED DIFFERENTLY AND CONFLICT WITH THE INTENTION OF THE MINISTER. IF THIS HAPPENS, ONLY THE INTENTION OF THE MINISTER AND NOT THE INTERPRETATION, APPLIES,+ HE ADDED.

EARLIER, DATUK SHAHRIR HAD A HEATED EXCHANGE OF WORDS WITH DEPUTY HOME MINISTER DATUK MEGAT JUNID MEGAT AYOB ON THE MEANING OF THE PHRASE +WHICH IS LIKELY TO ALARM PUBLIC OPINION+ IN THE BILL.

DATUK MEGAT JUNID SAID THE PHRASE APPLIED TO MATTERS THAT COULD JEOPARDISE NATIONAL SECURITY AND THREATEN PUBLIC ORDER.

+IF THE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FROM JOHOR BAHRU WINS A WORLD WALKATHON, THIS WILL SURELY CAUSE A PUBLIC STIR, BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT LIKELY TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST NEWS REPORTS OF HIS VICTORY,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SHAHRIR ALSO ROSE SEVERAL TIMES TO BRING UP THE BERNAMA REPORT ON THE SHOOTING INCIDENT IN THE CHOW KIT AREA RECENTLY, AND ASKED WHAT ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THE NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY FOR AN ERROR IN ITS REPORT ON THE INCIDENT. -- MORE

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PARLIAMENT-PRINT 3 KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THIS ISSUE DID NOT ARISE AS THE BILL WAS NOT TABLED IN PARLIAMENT THEN. (POLICE ARRESTED PREBET ADAM JAAFAR FROM THE RANGERS IN CONNECTION WITH THE INCIDENT AND THE CASE WILL BE HEARD IN COURT').

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO RAPPED DATUK SHAHRIR FOR BRINGING UP A HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION WHEN THE BILL HAD YET TO BE ENFORCED.

DATUK SHAHRIR THEN LEFT THE CHAMBER AFTER THE PRIME MINISTER HAD EXPLAINED THE RELEVANT MATTERS. -- BERNAMA

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