

# CHECK ON POLITICIANS

Amendments to Societies Act passed: 72 for, 21 against

**KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Amendments to the Societies Act 1966 were passed by the Dewan Rakyat today after a division.**

There were 72 votes for and 21 against the amendments tabled by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister said the amendments were to enable political parties to resolve internal problems without going to the courts.

"The amendments only apply to the administration and running of political parties as political parties.

"They will prevent the judicial system from being used for the political interests of party leaders or members. And they will free the courts from making political decisions," he said.

Of late, he said, there had been many politicians who filed cases in court or applied for injunctions to restrict another quarter.

"The result is that the party's constitution and its machinery to solve internal problems are made useless," he said.

As the Act now stood, any one member



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— Dr Mahathir

could deprive the majority of their rights, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, said the amendments would not protect political parties from other laws: "If political parties commit crimes, legal action can be taken against them."

Legal action could also be taken against leaders of political parties who abused power or were involved in corruption or commit criminal acts, he said.

The amendments would not take away the right of authorities to investigate party members if there were reasons to believe they had breached a law, he added.

Dr Mahathir said a political party was different from other organisations because it was not set up purely for the interest of its members.

He said a political party's aim was to propagate its ideology and to influence the system and objectives of a country's administration.

Therefore, whether small or big, its struggle would affect the whole nation, he said.

Dr Mahathir said a person joined a party on his own free will and entered into a contract to adhere to its constitution, rules and regulations.

"If a member disregarded these, he would be breaching the contract," he said.

"Why should the laws of the country protect such a person? What would happen to society if people who breach a trust is protected while those who abide by their pledges are robbed of their rights?"

Dr Mahathir said a party without a fair constitution would not attract many members and would not be effective.

He said a member could also seek to amend

the constitution through the proper procedure, and if he failed he should accept his defeat and, if he wished, withdraw from the party.

He said that laws were made for the good of the people, but there were those who always looked for loopholes and whose actions defeated the purpose of the legislation.

"Because we cannot disregard laws, those that cause injustice must be repealed or amended.

"The existing Societies Act has become unfair to political parties and their members," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the amendments would also benefit the judicial system because they would reduce the backlog of

## The amendments to Societies Act

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cases, with about 500,000 pending.

"As political cases and injunctions tend to get priority, the hearing of other cases is delayed," he said. 5-14-87

He said this was against the dictum *Justice delayed is justice denied*.

The amendments stipulate that:

• AN election in any political party shall not be made invalid by reason of non-compliance of any provisions of the party's constitution, rules or regulations, if the results would have been the same had they been complied with;

• AN election of a political party should not be made invalid due to the participation of a person disqualified under the Act or the party's constitution if the results would have been the same without him taking part; and

• ANY decision of a political party on the interpretation of its constitution, rules or regulations or any matter related to the affairs of the party shall be final and conclusive. Any court proceedings on the decision is prohibited and the court has no jurisdiction to determine any suit, application, question or proceeding on the validity of such decision.

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