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PARLIAMENT-ELECTION
BM

KUALA LUMPUR, MARCH 15⁹⁰ (BERNAMA) -- THE PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY TABLED AMENDMENTS TO THE ELECTION ACT FOR SECOND READING IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT, INTRODUCING A NEW SYSTEM OF COUNTING VOTES.

UNDER THE PROPOSED SYSTEM, VOTES WILL NO LONGER BE COUNTED AT COUNTING CENTRES FIXED FOR EACH CONSTITUENCY AS AT PRESENT BUT AT THE POLLING CENTRES THEMSELVES.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THIS WOULD DISPEL ALLEGATIONS OF COUNTING CLERKS PURPOSELY MIS-COUNTING VOTES FOR BENEFIT OF CERTAIN CANDIDATES OR OF BALLOT BOXES BEING SWITCHED WHILE ON THE WAY TO COUNTING CENTRE.

HE SAID A TALLY SHEET WOULD BE PROVIDED UNDER THE SYSTEM FOR THE COUNTING CLERKS WHO WOULD RECORD THE VOTES OBTAINED BY THE CANDIDATES.

MISTAKES COULD ALSO BE MINIMISED UNDER THE SYSTEM BECAUSE THE NUMBER OF BALLOT PAPERS AT EACH COUNTING CENTRE WAS SMALL, HE SAID.

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID UNDER THE SYSTEM, THE COUNTING OF VOTES WOULD BE CONDUCTED BY THE RESPECTIVE HEADS OF THE POLLING CENTRES NOT THE RETURNING OFFICER AS AT PRESENT.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF CENTRALISED COUNTING WOULD BE USED WITH MINOR CHANGES IF IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO COUNT THE VOTES AT POLLING CENTRES.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE SYSTEM IS AS FOLLOWS:

+EACH POLLING CENTRE BECOMES A COUNTING CENTRE, INVOLVING THE SAME POLLING STAFF. AGENTS CAN BE PRESENT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTING OF VOTES=

+ONCE VOTES HAVE BEEN COUNTED, A PROVISIONAL RESULT WILL BE TRANSMITTED TO THE RETURNING OFFICER=

+THE RETURNING OFFICER WILL THEN TOTAL UP THE VOTES TO DETERMINE THE WINNING CANDIDATE= AND

+THE FINAL RESULT WILL ONLY BE ANNOUNCED ONCE THE RETURNING OFFICER HAS RECEIVED ALL THE TALLY SHEETS FROM HEADS OF POLLING CENTRE.-- MORE

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ACCORDING TO THE PRIME MINISTER, UNDER THE NEW SYSTEM, ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE KNOWN MUCH FASTER, AS EARLY AS BETWEEN 8PM AND 9PM.

THIS IS BECAUSE THE NUMBER OF VOTES TO BE COUNTED AT EACH POLLING CENTRE WILL BE AT THE MOST 700 TO 1,400 IF ELECTION FOR BOTH PARLIAMENTARY AND STATE ARE WERE HELD SIMULTANEOUSLY.

PRESENTLY, COUNTING OF VOTES CAN ONLY BE HELD ONCE ALL BALLOT BOXES HAVE REACHED THE COUNTING CENTRES.

THIS USUALLY STARTS AT 8.30PM AND THE RESULT WILL USUALLY BE KNOWN AFTER 1AM BECAUSE OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF BALLOT PAPERS, ABOUT 100,000 FOR PARLIAMENT AND STATE SEATS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE NEW SYSTEM WOULD ALSO ENABLE COUNTING OF VOTES TO BE HELD IN A PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE AS SUPPORTERS OF CANDIDATES AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WOULD BE DISPERSED AT VARIOUS PLACES.-- MORE

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+THIS WILL ALSO AVOID TENSE ATMOSPHERE AND INTERRUPTIONS,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID AS THERE WOULD BE NO TRANSPORTATION OF BALLOT BOXES, THIS WOULD INSTILL GREATER PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION.

HE SAID THE NEW SYSTEM WAS NOT ALIEN AS IT HAD BEEN SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT IN MOST DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE AMENDMENT BILL DID NOT SPELL OUT THE DETAILS OF THE SYSTEM BECAUSE THIS WOULD BE PREPARED BY THE ELECTION COMMISSION. -- BERNAMA

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