

REDELINEATION FOR THE PEOPLE

PM: Review is to give voters better representation

By SHAILA KOSHY

KAULA LUMPUR: The proposed redelineation of constituencies is to ensure that the people get better representation, **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the redelineation was in line with the amendment to the Federal Constitution in 1992 increasing the number of parliamentary seats from 133 to 145 in Peninsular Malaysia.

In tabling the Election Commission reports for Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah,

Dr Mahathir said the state assemblies had also increased the number of state seats.

He said the increase in seats was also in line with the economic and social development in the last eight years, along with the increase in the population and voters.

He said the Government had studied the proposals carefully and had no plans to make any changes.

Dr Mahathir said although the number of parliamentary and state seats for Sabah had not been increased, the commission had found it necessary to redelineate the boundaries there, too.

"This is so that the distribution of the

voters is more balanced and the people get a fairer representation," added Dr Mahathir.

He said the commission began its revision in July last year.

"The number of voters in the peninsula has increased to 6.83 million, that is, a 30.5 per cent increase over the 1984 figure," said Dr Mahathir.

He said the changes were made only after the commission had investigated the appeals against the commission's proposals.

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Redelineation needed, says Dr Ling

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As for Sabah, Dr Mahathir said it was difficult for the commission to balance the voters for each constituency based on the average number of voters because of the topography and demography of the rural areas.

As such, the proposed number of voters for certain areas was less than intended, he added.

In seconding the motion, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the redelineation was necessary in view of the increase in population and voters.

He congratulated the commission in carrying out its duties objectively.

"This shows maturity in the system of democracy practised in Malaysia," he added.

In rejecting the redelineation proposals, Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said the biggest problem with elections here was not vote-rigging on polling day but "the pre-rigging of the electoral process."

Lim said the commission completely rejected the democratic principle of "one-man, one-vote" as it had perpetuated weightage in the electoral system.

He added that the new redelineation exercise had further increased the rural weightage instead of reducing it to the 15 per cent weightage as envisaged in the Federal Constitution.

Lim said this report was the most politicised report in comparison to the ones in 1974 and 1984.

He claimed there was

Umno interference and manipulation of the commission but said it was difficult to prove because such meetings "were normally conducted in secret."

Lim cited a report *Move to have more Parliament, state seats in The Star* on April 3, 1991, as an example of Umno influence and input in the redelineation exercise.

He said the commission had very flimsy grounds for creating a new Langkawi parliamentary seat with 19,528 voters when there was a stronger case for creating one for Pangkor which has 21,748 voters.

Lim said the commission's redelineation exercise was so politicised that it had even engaged in political polemics with the previous PBS Sabah

Government.

"I understand there is even now a plot inside the Sabah Barisan Nasional, especially Sabah Umno, to remove Tan Sri Sankaran Dandai as the Chief Minister and pushing him to become the Yang di-Pertua Negri," he added.

Lim said the commission had acknowledged the abuses with the postal ballot system but had done nothing.

"The total electorate increased by 93 per cent between the 1974 and 1990 elections but the postal ballots increased by 400 per cent.

"A responsible commission which takes its constitutional duty seriously would take steps to stamp out electoral abuses, whether in the method or manner of the voting process," he added.