

Voters' names illegally from transferred constituency

By Farush Khan

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for tighter controls over voter registration to stop irregularities.

He said that he knew of 5,000 Umno supporters in Pahang whose names had been transferred, without their knowledge, from one parliamentary constituency to another.

In his speech at the launching of two books on the conduct of elections in Malaysia, he said the transfers were the work of one person, identified as a part-time staff member of the Election Commission.

At the same function, Election Commission secretary Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman told the Press that names of more than 20,000 voters had been switched to other areas without their knowledge in the 1994 electoral roll.

He said collaboration between political party supporters and some temporary Election Commission employees was partly to blame.

Other factors, he said, were the inefficiency of the temporary workers and their misinterpretation of the regulations.

"Most of the cases were in the east coast States of Peninsular Malaysia such as Kelantan and Terengganu," he said.

The incident that the Prime Minister referred to, he said, took place in Maran, Pahang.

tation of the people was based on the number of seats won, need not be changed as it had proven to be effective.

He said the system had provided sufficient opportunities for Malaysians to choose their own Government.

Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, said the BN had no fear of elections, but instead looked at it as a "motivating factor" to work harder for the people as it was always wary that the people had the power to elect or remove a Government.

In jest, he said there was no need for him to announce the date of the general election, but was willing to act on the advice of the people.

He was responding to the TV3's *Malaysia Hari Ini* programme early today where members of the public were asked when would they call for the next election if they were the prime minister.

Many said they would call for it this year because of the country's political stability and encouraging economic development.

Dr Mahathir said the later the election was held the better it would be as the Barisan Nasional Government "wants longer life".

"We are given five years (to rule). What is the hurry?" he asked.

"There is a Government of a neighbouring country which kept the election date in strict confidence. It prepared itself, printed posters

Abdul Rashid did not identify the political parties concerned, but said legal action would be taken against the culprits and the law provided for a jail term of two years for offenders.

Abdul Rashid said even though the Election Commission stipulated that a person wishing to change his polling address could do so through a representative, he should nevertheless sign the necessary forms himself and hand over a certified photostat copy of his identity card.

Dr Mahathir said he did not blame the Election Commission in the case he mentioned because the person responsible was a part-time staff. Generally, he said, the registration is well conducted and past elections were held smoothly.

However, he called on the commission to tighten regulations on voter registration.

On elections in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said that as the people were becoming more sophisticated and educated now, it was appropriate that they regard their role as voters as a heavy responsibility.

"(This is important) because if we make a wrong choice, there will be serious problems and the country may not develop," he said.

The Prime Minister said the present system in Malaysia, where the represen-

in Hong Kong and announced the election date nine days before polling day."

"As a result, the Opposition had no chance to even print their posters and therefore lost," he said.

Manipulation by ruling parties in some countries had made them win as much as 99.9 per cent of the votes polled in elections.

"In Malaysia, if we (the BN) can get 70 per cent, it will be sufficient. We actually need 66.6 per cent or a two-thirds majority to run the country effectively without much problems," he said again in jest.

Dr Mahathir said the fact that some BN candidates had lost in previous elections proved that elections in Malaysia are conducted in a democratic manner and this had even been acknowledged by the Commonwealth observers in the 1990 general election.

In the 1990 election, BN polled 53.38 per cent of the votes in the parliamentary contest and 56.70 per cent of the votes for State seats.

The two books launched today were *The Conduct of Elections in Malaysia* by Election Commission secretary Abdul Rashid and its Bahasa Malaysia version, *Penjalanan Pilihan Raya Malaysia*. They were published by Berita Publishing Sdn. Bhd.