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More state, parliamentary seats proposed (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Concluding its latest redelineation exercise, the Election Commission has proposed an additional 25 parliamentary and 59 state seats.

The EC has proposed no changes for either parliamentary or state seat allocations in Perlis, Kedah, Terengganu and Sarawak. Kelantan will not get any additional parliamentary seats but will have two more state seats.

The list of the new constituencies will be on display from tomorrow at district offices, Government agencies and community centres nationwide. The public has one month to provide feedback on the new constituencies.

The list of polling districts and their electorates will be displayed during office hours until mid-September.

EC chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman said Johor would get the most new seats - six parliamentary and 14 state constituencies - followed by Sabah with five and 12, and Selangor with five and six.

Pahang will have three additional parliamentary and four state seats; Penang, two and seven; Perak, one and seven; Negri Sembilan, one and four; Malacca, one and three; and Kuala Lumpur will get one more parliamentary seat.

Abdul Rashid said at a luncheon talk with senior editors of the New Straits Times at Balai Berita that the EC hoped to table the necessary amendments in Parliament in November "if everything is on schedule".

Under the proposal, the number of MPs will be increased from 194 to 219, and State Assemblymen from 504 to 563.

A redelineation exercise is carried out every eight years.

Abdul Rashid said the proposal would have to go through the entire legal process, including getting public feedback, a public inquiry, and approval of both Houses of Parliament before it is gazetted, while the new state seats have to be approved by the respective State Legislative Assemblies.

"If any party or group is unhappy about the redelineation, they can make representations to the EC.

"We will study all representations and conduct an inquiry if the grouses are justified. The public must be clear about this; they cannot object to the proposed increase (additional seats) but only the delineation and new electoral boundaries."

Abdul Rashid said he had briefed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Dr Mohamed Zahir Ismail on the proposal.

"We discussed a few pertinent matters including the logistics and other necessary adjustments for Parliament to accommodate its new members."

He said the new seats were drawn up after taking into account population growth, demographic profiles and levels of development.

During the last redelineation in November 1992, the EC created 12 new parliamentary seats and 43 state seats in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah. At that time, there were 7,306,087 registered voters compared with 9.9 million at present.

According to National Registration Department records, there were 12.2 million Malaysians aged above 21 on January 2002, of whom 2.3 million had yet to register as voters.

Before drawing up its proposal, the EC carried out detailed studies on the ratio of voters to elected representatives, and received feedback from the State Governments.

The national average was 47,000 voters per constituency in 1992, and the current redelineation was drawn up on the basis of an average of 50,000 voters in a parliamentary constituency and 15,000 for a state seat. However, this was not a rigid criterion as urban areas with higher population densities and better amenities could accommodate larger electorates per constituency.