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PM: A fair redelineation (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the Election Commission's redelineation exercise is fair as it is based on the distribution of the population.

He said the commission had to create more seats in some areas because of the increase of population in some States.

Dr Mahathir refuted Opposition claims that the Barisan Nasional had had a hand in the exercise, which they say favours the ruling coalition.

"That's not the case. The commission carried out the exercise according to the population in the respective constituencies ... let Pas say what they want," he said after giving away prizes to the winners of the Centenary International Horse Show 2002 at the Selangor Polo and Riding Club.

The Prime Minister said Kelantan and Terengganu had fewer or no extra seats because "many voters in these States ran away to other States because they did not like living under Pas rule".

Dr Mahathir also said the exercise was required to ensure that voters cast their votes in constituencies where they reside.

"We realised that Pas had been bringing in voters from other areas to win elections in certain constituencies. During the Anak Bukit State by-election (last month), Pas took 2,000 voters from my constituency (Kubang Pasu) to vote in Anak Bukit," said Dr Mahathir.

Pas candidate Amiruddin Hamzah defeated Barisan Nasional candidate Datuk Zakaria Said in that by-election.

The redelineation exercise was criticised by the Opposition after it was put on display on Thursday.

Reacting to the criticism, the Election Commission warned parties that it would bring them to court if they failed to substantiate their allegations.

Commission chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman had said the commission welcomed constructive criticism from the public but not unfounded allegations which stood to ruin the credibility of the independent body.

Under the commission's recommendations, there will be 25 additional parliamentary seats and 59 State seats.

The new electoral boundaries will be officially gazetted when the recommendations are endorsed by Parliament and State Assemblies and receive the Royal Assent.

On the promotion of horse-riding activities in the country, Dr Mahathir said many things were being done to popularise the sport.

"We recently found a jungle track which was used long ago to cross from Pahang to Selangor.

"We are planning to use it to promote the sport."

On another matter, Dr Mahathir said he would decide later on the extension of Datuk Jamaluddin Jarjis' term as chairman of Tenaga Nasional.

Jamaluddin's term as TNB chairman expires on Aug 31 and there are rumours that he may be made a Cabinet Minister, on which Dr Mahathir declined to comment.

"Aug 31 is still a long way to go. I will decide later," he said.