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EC proposal welcomed (HL)

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ALOR STAR, Sun. - The Government agrees with the Election Commission's proposal for more powers to overcome the problem of phantom voters, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He told reporters today the Government welcomed the proposal, which would empower the EC to transfer voters from one constituency to another based on the addresses in their identity cards, if it would help overcome the problem.

"If it is to prevent phantom voters, then we agree to it," he said at Sultan Abdul Halim airport before leaving for Kuala Lumpur today.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was here to attend the investiture ceremony in conjunction with the 75th birthday of the Sultan of Kedah at Istana Anak Bukit.

The Prime Minister received the Darjah Kerabat (DK), the State's highest award.

The New Sunday Times today front-paged the EC proposal, which will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval.

EC chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman was quoted as saying that the proposal would be submitted with one requiring political parties to register with the commission.

Both the Barisan Nasional and the Opposition claim to have been bedevilled by phantom voters in elections.

Elaborating on the proposal, Rashid said the EC would write to those whom it believed were phantom voters, asking them to provide proof that they are eligible to vote in that constituency.

Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet would examine and decide on the proposal once it was submitted by the EC.

On a possible shake-up in Umno liaison committees in all States, the Umno president said they might be revamped following Thursday's major shake-up of Kelantan Umno.

Dr Mahathir said change was inevitable in every State Umno, sooner or later.

"All will have to face it (eventually)," he said.

Responding to a question, however, Dr Mahathir said he did not know of any imminent change to the Umno liaison committees of five States, as reported by Mingguan Malaysia today.

The front-page report identified the Umno liaison committees of Perak, Perlis, Kedah, Terengganu and Malacca as those to be revamped, with several long-serving elected representatives to be dropped.

The report said several State liaison committee chairmen were determined to see changes to strengthen the party.

This followed the shake-up of Kelantan Umno, in which deputy head Datuk Annuar Musa and three key office-bearers were dropped.

Dr Mahathir also refuted Mingguan Malaysia's report that revamping State liaison committees would be on the agenda of the next Umno supreme council meeting.