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Motion on new seats tabled

reports on "Dewan Rakyat" by Ramlan Said; Shamini Darshni; Farrah Naz ACTING Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday tabled a motion supporting the creation of 25 new parliamentary seats and 63 state seats, and praised the Election Commission for a job well done.

He said the commission had adhered to all requirements in conducting the exercise, including submitting its reports and proposals to the head of government and Parliament as stipulated under the Constitution.

Abdullah said the reports, one covering peninsular Malaysia and another involving Sabah, provided a comprehensive insight into how the commission arrived at its decision and recommendations.

"The decision to increase the number of seats in peninsular Malaysia and Sabah is consistent with the social economic progress achieved over the last eight years (the last redelienation exercise).

"It is also in line with the increase in population and voters," he said before a packed House.

Abdullah said the commission realised the burden shouldered by elected representatives, especially in areas where facilities and transportation were lacking or almost non-existent.

"In view of this, it has tried to reduce the size of constituencies but without affecting the number of voters."

The commission circulated its proposals to MPs last week.

The 714-page dossier was tabled together with a report on the redelienation of parliamentary and state seats in Sabah. Maps of the new constituencies were attached.

In peninsular Malaysia, the commission proposed the creation of 20 new parliamentary constituencies and 51 new state seats.

The new parliamentary seats are in Penang (two), Perak, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Negri Sembilan and Malacca (one each), Pahang (three), Selangor (five) and Johor (six).

The proposed state seats are in Kelantan (two), Penang (seven), Perak (seven), Pahang (four), Selangor (eight), Negri Sembilan (four), Malacca (three) and Johor (16).

Some constituencies will also have a name change.

In Sabah, it proposed the creation of five new parliamentary constituencies and 12 state seats.

Later at the lobby, Abdullah dismissed the Opposition's contention that the Government was in a hurry to endorse the proposals.

"If that is the case, we would have amended the Constitution (now) but as we can see, it will only be done in June.

"But before we do that, the House has to approve the proposals."

To another contention that the Government was preparing for an election this year, Abdullah referred to a statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that no election would be held before October.

Dr Mahathir is expected to step down after the Organisation of the Islamic Conference meeting in October.

On the possibility of the country going to the polls in November or December, Abdullah quipped: "Yes, in November and December 2004."

The acting Prime Minister reiterated that the exercise was conducted in a transparent manner, with no hidden motives.