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Motion to amend Constitution for new seats

GELANG PATAH, Sun. - The Government will table a motion in the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara in June to amend Article 46 of the Constitution to pave the way for the creation of 25 additional parliamentary seats.

The new seats are the result of the recent redelineation exercise by the Election Commission.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was expected to table the motion.

"We may face some protests from the opposition parties but, nonetheless, are quite confident there will not be much problem getting the motion passed by Parliament."

Rais, who is also an Umno supreme council member, was speaking after opening the Gelang Patah Umno division meeting here today.

He said once the motion was passed, the number of MP seats would have to be increased from 194 to 219. "This will call for several changes, including the setup of the Dewan Rakyat chamber, which will need a bigger space to accommodate the new seats."

Rais said the Government was also considering limiting the number of new seats to be created in the future.

He said this was provided for under Article 113 of the Constitution.

He added that a proposal on the matter had been submitted to the Cabinet, arguing the necessity to refrain from further creation of electoral constituencies.

"This is basically a matter of avoiding over-representation."

"By the time the next redelineation exercise comes up, the country's population should be around 30 million to 35 million.

"That means each constituency will have an average of between 230,000 and 235,000 people, considering the number of seats created after the recent redelineation exercise.

"Our target should be around this figure and, at the same time, prevent the ratio of representation and the people from getting too high."

Rais said it was the normal practice in other democracies to refrain from creating too many seats in the legislative chamber.

"The Government is considering the proposal to stop a drastic increase in the number of seats."