

18 voting age: 21-year-old to be registered automatically

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KUALA LUMPUR, July 16 (Bernama) -- The automatic registration of 18-year-old citizens following the Amendment of the Federal Constitution will also cover 21-year-old youths who have not registered as voters.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the matter would be given priority by the Election Commission (EC) in the implementation of automatic registration of voters.

He was responding to Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob (BN-Bera) who requested confirmation from the government that 3.9 million Malaysians aged 21 years and eligible to vote, but had not been registered as voters would be registered automatically after the amendments were approved.

"We are aware that among those who had attained the voting age (21 years) but had not registered previously, would also be registered automatically," said Dr Mahathir when winding up the debate on the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2019 at the Dewan Rakyat, today.

Besides reducing the age of nationals who are eligible to vote from 21 to 18 years, the amendment also proposed the reduction in the age of nationals eligible to be Members of Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies to 18 years and that they too be registered automatically by the EC as voters.

The Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2019 was later passed by the Dewan Rakyat after obtaining more than two-thirds majority approval from Members of Parliament.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir said implementing agencies involved directly in the automatic registration should be given the opportunity and space to make proper preparations, for example in terms of data integration between the National Registration Department, Malaysian Prisons Department, the Malaysian Health Ministry, the Royal Malaysia Police, Malaysian Armed Forces and other related agencies.

"It must be remembered that the implementation of the automatic voter registration would

result in an estimated 7.8 million new voters to be registered in the electoral roll for the next five years.

"This is not an easy task as it involved cost, time, locality determination and the correct election division," explained the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir said the government could not tolerate any error in the electoral roll because it involved the rights of every citizen who were eligible to vote as promised in the Federal Constitution.

Dr Mahathir also responded to several other questions raised by Members of Parliament including stating that the government did not intend to compel voters to go out and vote during the election but instead would boost efforts to give awareness to them.

He said the Federal government had also not held discussions with the state governments for the purpose of reducing the age limit for candidates but was confident it would be supported by the state governments as it provided the space and opportunity to the youth representatives to participate in the election.

Dr Mahathir said the amendment to the Federal Constitution was proof that the Pakatan Harapan government was serious in realising the 17 Promises in the Book of Hope (Buku Harapan), that is, to reduce the age limit of those eligible to vote to 18 years and the automatic registration based on the register of the National Registration Department.

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