

Dr Mahathir elated by unanimous support to amend constitution

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KUALA LUMPUR, July 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was delighted by the overwhelming bipartisan support in the Dewan Rakyat today for proposed amendments to the Federal Constitution to lower the voting age to 18 years.

Describing it as the dawn of a new era, he said it was the first time under the new government that a bill was passed with the agreement of all parties.

"Some have pointed out why we didn't amend it during my time when I was the prime minister; before I took over it also did not happen.

"... but this time it happened with the support of all, no one rejected...100 per cent of those present and far higher than the two-thirds support we needed to amend the Constitution," he told a press conference after winding up the debate on the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2019, which was passed with the support of all 211 members present in the House.

He thanked the opposition for keeping their pledge to support the amendments.

Dr Mahathir said the bipartisan approval was a feat for the people in electing their representatives.

"It shows the maturity of Malaysians because firstly, when there was a government transition, there was no riot or violence of any kind; it was a very smooth change of the government," he said.

Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman said at the same press conference that the victory today belonged to young people who wanted their voice to be better heard in and outside Parliament, adding that issues faced by the group could also be championed more seriously.

Speaking to reporters later, he said: "I hope this bipartisanship will continue. In politics we will

have different opinions but it does not mean we are hostile to the point we cannot cooperate for the sake of the people' s agenda.

"That's why I have to thank and congratulate all...Alhamdulillah we can finally do it together," he said.

The Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2019 secured 211 votes, more than the two-thirds required to pass the bill. The Dewan has 222 members but 11 were not present when the vote was taken.

When announcing the results of voting, Dewan Rakyat Speaker Datuk Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof said no one voted against the amendments or abstained.

In addition to lowering the age of citizens eligible to vote from 21 to 18, the amendments also proposed lowering the eligible age to contest for Dewan Rakyat and State Legislative Assembly seats to 18 years, and automatic registration of voters at 18 years.

In his reaction, Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the opposition bloc had fulfilled its promise to support the amendments in the bill.

"It is a recognition of young people who are believed to be capable of thinking to determine the government and the leadership of the country in the future," he said.

PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said increasing the awareness of the younger generation on their responsibility to vote and follow national politics should be the main thing to work on.

Meanwhile, in the government bloc, Parti Warisan Sabah president and Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal said the amendments were in line with what was to be achieved in order for the younger generation to help shape the future of the country.

"We certainly support their right to not only vote, but also to become a candidate. I am convinced that 18 years is the right age to enable their rights to be fulfilled," he said.

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