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`Stop turning Suhakam into a punching bag'

THE Malaysian Human Rights Commission and its head Tan Sri Musa Hitam received support from two MPs who reminded everyone that the body was established by Parliament itself.

"We created it and yet we are the one criticising it," said Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad when debating the 2001 allocations for the Foreign Ministry.

He said whenever the commission speaks out, it invited criticisms.

"When the Opposition is not satisfied, they run down Suhakam, when the Government is unhappy, it criticises Suhakam. Don't turn the commission into a punching bag," he said.

Ruhanie said he defended Musa not because he was once his boss but because Malaysians had to change their mind-set about human rights issues and not to model them along the standards of the West.

Kerk Kim Hock (DAP-Kota Melaka) agreed that there was no point setting up Suhakam if the old mind-set about human rights were not changed.

But he pointed out it was Barisan Nasional leaders who often criticised Suhakam and Musa.

On another matter, Kerk asked Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar to provide proof supporting a recent statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the Opposition was receiving foreign support.

Describing the claim as serious, he said the identity of the countries and Opposition parties should be made known.

He urged the Government to establish a royal commission to investigate the matter.

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