

# BIASED REPORT

## Suhakam trying to please the West, says Mahathir

By SA'ODAH ELIAS

SUBANG: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has accused the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) of being biased, saying its report on an illegal gathering was not in the interest of the nation but meant to please the West.

He said the commission seemed disinclined to make an independent decision based on Malaysian values, fearing that it would not be praised by the *orang*

putih (whites). **STAR** 23 AUG 2001

Dr Mahathir said he had good reasons for taking Suhakam to task because the report on the incident seemed to reflect "a very Western bias which was at odds with local values."

"We expect them (Suhakam members) to be fair, to understand that they are Malaysians and that they should think in terms of being Malaysians.

"But they are influenced by the West, let's say, very much influenced, because they want to prove

that we are very liberal and all that, but the Western countries themselves are not that liberal.

"They are going to beat up any demonstrator. Just wait and see when they have the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Australia (next month). I expect, there will be demonstrations and there will be violence and police brutality," he told reporters upon his arrival from Kampala after attending the Global 2001 Smart Partnership International Dialogue at the RMAF base here.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the commission's report which stated that the police had violated several aspects of human rights during the gathering at the Kesas Highway on Nov 5.

In the report, Suhakam commissioner Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin had said that the violations included the use of force and damage to private property and its confiscation.

Dr Mahathir said the commission looked at things from only one perspective, showing the police

force as very nasty and had failed to give weightage to their (the police) side of the story.

"The police had given their side of the story and that should be given some weight because they were working under pressure. They had to contend with this new phenomenon (street demonstrations) which is being encouraged by the West," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the commission was "~~too~~ enamoured" with

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values set by the West as opposed to the Government and the police which did not care about what they (the West) said so long as the interest of public safety and welfare was protected.

The Government and the police, he said, also wanted to look after the interest of the people, including their human rights, but if they acted violently, the law must be upheld.

He said that at times, the police had to resort to force when faced with a violent mob of demonstrators because they broke the law, like leaving their vehicles in the middle of the road and taking away the keys to the ignition.

Such acts, he said, required stronger reaction from the police because the demonstra-

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tors were trying to turn Malaysia into some countries where street demonstrations could topple governments.

"Our police are very considerate. By right, they should be given the power to use force but what happens is that their actions are criticised and are blown out of proportion by our own people."

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said Uganda offered vast potential for Malaysian investors, especially in the tourism sector.

The country, he said, was poised for further development and Malaysian businessmen should take advantage of the situation by expanding their operations there.

"Compared to Malaysia, the infrastructure in Uganda is much weaker. Its power generation capacity is only about 300 megawatts compared to

our 10,000MW and its roads, though much better than before, are not very comfortable.

"But it has the potential to develop further, especially in the tourism sector."

Dr Mahathir said one thing he realised was that the famous Lake Victoria, shared by Uganda and several other African countries, had yet to be developed.

"Maybe Malaysian businessmen can look at the possibility of setting up resorts along the lake."

He said President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni had the interest to develop Uganda.

"If we push our products, we can export a lot to Uganda and there are many things they produce which we can buy like coffee, tea and cotton," he added.