

Cabinet decides only Abdullah to make statement on Suhakam report

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PETALING JAYA, Wed: The cabinet decided today that only Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi can comment on the Suhakam report on the Jalan Kebun incident.

Abdullah, who is also the home minister, chaired today's cabinet meeting in the absence of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who returned from Uganda only this morning.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Utama Dr Rais Yatim said the decision is

to prevent confusion over reactions to the report which strongly criticised police action in handling the demonstrators.

"He (Abdullah) is studying the report and will make a statement once it is done," Rais said.

"The cabinet has also taken note of the report."

Suhakam released the 66-page report on Monday blaming the police for human rights violations through heavy-handed tactics when dispersing an illegal gathering along the Kesas Highway near Shah Alam on Nov 5.

The report, prepared

by the three-member inquiry panel, detailed various aspects of human rights abuses based on testimonies from parties present at the gathering.

The panel also made comprehensive recommendations on procedures of assemblies, crowd control and dispersal methods and treatment of arrested persons.

Yesterday, Abdullah said police have always been reminded to follow the law when dealing with assemblies although they had complained about abusive language and provocation by a tense crowd.