

PM: Suhakam much influenced by western values

By R. Manirajan

PETALING JAYA, Wed: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) was

influenced by western values when compiling its report accusing police of violating human rights when dispersing an illegal assembly.

"It (Suhakam) is influenced by western thinking ... very much influenced," he said.

When it was pointed out

that the government had appointed the Suhakam commissioners, Mahathir replied: "We appointed them but we expect them to be fair ... to understand that they are Malaysians and they should think in terms of being Malaysian."

He said he has reasons for saying so because "Suhakam's report reflects a very western bias ... this is our country, we have different values".

Suhakam, he added, is not thinking of the interest of Malaysians.

Mahathir, speaking to

reporters after returning from official visits to Yemen and Kampala, Uganda, at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang this morning, was asked to comment on Suhakam's 66-page report on

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the illegal gathering on Jalan Kebun in Shah Alam last Nov 5, and its findings that the police acted heavy-handedly when dispersing the crowd.

The report cited "existing practices and policies of the police and other authorities" as the contributory factors of the human rights violations.

Mahathir said the report was Suhakam's view and it is seeing things only from one viewpoint - that the police are bad.

Told that Suhakam's findings were based on evidence given by the people involved and also by

the police during the inquiry, Mahathir said he acknowledges that but he is of the opinion that the police side of the story should also be given weight as they are work-

ing under pressure.

He said police in Genoa, Seattle and Vancouver are known to be more brutal with street demonstrators, even shooting them.

"Do our police do that? We are very considerate here and, in fact, the police should be given the powers to use force," he said.

Mahathir said the people are ungrateful to the police for safeguarding national security and peace.

"Malaysians are afraid that the west might not praise us," he said.

"We do not care whether they do or not ... we want to take care of the peace in our country."