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Mahathir-Suhakam

SUHAKAM'S REPORT INFLUENCED BY WESTERN THINKING, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 22 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam)'s inquiry report on the Kesas Highway-Jalan Kebun illegal gathering last year is very much influenced by western thinking and not in the interest of the nation.

"They (Suhakam members) are not thinking in the interest of Malaysia," he said upon his return today from Uganda where he attended the Global 2001 Smart Partnership International Dialogue in Kampala.

He said Suhakam should have given some weight to the evidence given during its inquiry by the police who were working under pressure to deal with the illegal assembly on Nov 5 last year.

"That is their (Suhakam's) view and they only view from one angle and only look at police brutality. At times the police have to resort to force because the demonstrators too use force," he said at a news conference upon arrival at the Royal Malaysian Air Force station in Subang here today.

The prime minister was commenting on the report released by Suhakam Commissioner Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin on Monday which blamed the police for human rights violations during crowd dispersal and treatment of people arrested for taking part in the illegal assembly.

The Suhakam inquiry, by a three-member panel headed by Anuar, heard testimonies from 46 witnesses over a 20-day hearing beginning Nov 29 last year.

Seven expert witnesses, including four doctors who treated those injured in the incident, were among those who gave evidence.

Police detained altogether 125 people in the incident and seized from them parangs and wooden bats, among other offensive weapons.

Dr Mahathir said the demonstrators wanted to make Malaysia like other countries where demonstrations could topple the government...This is a new phenomenon."

The prime minister said that compared with the way anti-globalisation and anti-World Trade Organisation demonstrators were dealt with in Genoa, Seattle and Vancouver recently, the police there were more brutal and had acted in worse ways.

In fact, in the Genoa incident the Italian police not only fired shots at demonstrators but even ran their vehicle over a dead demonstrator, he said.

"Their police are brutal while our police are more considerate. Our police should have been empowered to use force," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir lamented that Malaysians were not thankful that their police force was more considerate in maintaining law and order compared to the more brutal foreign police.

"Despite being highly civilised and constantly concerned over human rights and the like, the foreign police act in more brutal ways when faced with violent mobs," he said.

The prime minister said it seemed that Malaysians fear losing praise from whites for not respecting human rights.

"Why bother whether the whites will praise us or not. Our uppermost concern is to preserve peace in the country.

"They (Suhakam) are influenced by western thinking, they want to prove that we are liberal. But the west is not as liberal and they are going to beat out any demonstration," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians should wait and see and can expect demonstrations that could turn violent at the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Australia.

He said that while the government always put the people's interest and human rights first, the authorities would have enforce the law when dealing with people resorting to violence.

Dr Mahathir added that he would go through the report of the Suhakam inquiry and the recommendations put forward.

-- BERNAMA

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