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DR MAHATHIR-NAZRI DEBATE

'POLICE MOVE TO AVOID PUBLIC DISORDER'

IGP says his men have every right to prohibit the event under Police Act 1967

AWAINA ARBEE
AND FAIRUZ MOHD SHAHAR
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

THE decision to not grant a permit for the debate between Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz and former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was taken as it would inevitably lead to public disorder.

As such, said Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar, police had every right to prohibit the debate under the Police Act 1967.

Responding to claims that the move was unconstitutional and that police acted beyond their power, he said his men were merely exercising powers vested under Section 3(3) of the Police Act, which "forms the pillar of policing in accordance with the Federal Constitution".

"When discretion means denial,

it must be understood that police are exercising their authority and judgment, based on evidence of a potential threat to the safety and welfare of the public.

"As such, to say that police have indirectly obstructed freedom of speech is irrational," he said in a statement yesterday.

Khalid said the decision was made after taking into consideration that if the event was allowed to take place, it would create public disorder due to the presence of certain security concerns.

"This is evidenced by various objections raised thus far, in relation to the proposed debate. To charge that police were abusing their power (in prohibiting the debate) is preposterous, as (we) have facilitated numerous debates prior to this."

Khalid said the matter was not a question of abuse of power, but the duty of the police in exercising discretionary power in the interests of the people.

On Sunday, Selangor police said they had revoked the permit for the debate which was scheduled to take place at Karang-kraf's Sultan Muhammad V Hall in Shah Alam on Friday.

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It had initially been scheduled for March 25 in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, but was postponed due to the organisers' failure to get police approval.

In **Putrajaya**, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said yesterday he would study the reasons why police put a stop to the debate, adding that he and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had nothing to do with the decision.

"The decision was made by the Kuala Kangsar and Selangor police. Because it was an operational decision, there was no need for them to refer to me as home minister.

"Hence, the order did not come from me or the prime minister. However, I will still look into the reasons why the debate had to be cancelled.

"If we feel the debate should carry on, we will ask police to give the permit," he said after visiting the International Modern Arabic School (IMAS) in Presint 14 here yesterday.

Zahid said every party should, at least for now, accept the decision by the police to prohibit the debate.



Tan Sri Khalid
Abu Bakar