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## DPM: No go to Nazri-Dr M debate solely a police decision

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said neither he nor the Prime Minister directed police to cancel the debate between Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Deputy Prime Minister said it was purely a police decision and the matter was not referred to him in his capacity as Home Minister.

"There is no political interference. The matter was at the discretion of the Selangor police chief and prior to that, the acting Perak police chief.

"Nevertheless, I want to have a look at the reasons why they cancelled the debate. If we feel that it should or can be held, we will ask for a permit to be issued," said Dr Ahmad Zahid during a visit to the International Modern Arabic School at Precinct 14.

However, the Deputy Prime Minister pledged to abide by the police decision if the reasons for the cancellation were valid.

"If they have strong reasons but which cannot be made public, I will respect the decision," he said.

Police initially granted a permit for the debate between the former prime minister and the Tourism and Culture Minister, scheduled for Friday at the Karangraf headquarters in Shah Alam.

But police later revoked it, saying there was a credible threat to public order if the debate was allowed to go on.

An intelligence report stated that there would be certain groups causing disturbances on the day of the event, as well as before and after it, said police.

The debate had been planned for March 25 in Kuala Kangsar but Perak police would not issue a permit for it.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar said it was exercising powers under Section 3(3) of the Police Act 1967.

"To claim that the police is abusing its powers is preposterous because we have facilitated other debates prior to this.

"We are exercising our authority and judgment based on evidence of a potential threat to the safety and welfare of the public," he said in a statement yesterday.