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# 'We never needed a permit before'

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Hulu Selangor," he told a press conference at the state police headquarters here yesterday.

He said the organiser had applied for a permit under Section 9(1) of the Peaceful Assembly Act but the Shah Alam police chief rejected the application over public safety concerns, adding that individuals have claimed they fear for their safety and that of their family members.

This is the second time the debate has been cancelled, as Perak police had refused to issue a permit when it was first scheduled to be held in Kuala Kangsar on March 25.

The debate between Nazri and Mahathir was to be, among other things, on the iMDB issue, the Bumiputera Malaysia Finance (BMF) scandal in the 1980s and Bank Negara Malaysia's foreign exchange losses.

Mohd Fuad also refuted Mahathir's claims that the debate should not be cancelled as the venue, Karangkras headquarters here, is in an industrial area and not a residential area.

"Maybe he (Mahathir) should come and visit the area. There is a residential area close by and there are people (working) in the industrial area," he said, adding there is a possibility for the debate to go on in

future, but public safety must be given top priority.

Meanwhile, debate organiser Kumpulan Media Karangkras said it was clueless why a permit was required for it.

Its managing director Datuk Hussamuddin Yaacob said the group had organised 45 similar debates and none had required approval from the authorities.

"There was never a need to apply for a permit. We just had to inform the police.

"But this time, they insisted that we apply for one. I'm not even sure why.

"We have organised 45 such debates. There was even one involving then Bersih 2.0 chairman Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan and the Election Commission, where thousands came to watch.

"Even for that, we only informed the



Nazri



Mahathir

authorities," he told *theSun* yesterday.

Hussamuddin added that he was puzzled why after issuing a permit on March 31 for the debate, police decided to revoke it the day after.

"We complied with all requirements, including using the same format as previous debates, having it in a closed-door venue, and in a gated area.

"We had even given an assurance we would control the crowd, even from outside our main gate. Unfortunately, we've had the approval revoked," he said.

Hussamuddin said Karangkras will respect the decision, and not proceed with the debate.

Meanwhile, when contacted, Nazri said he will provide a statement to the press in parliament today.

The Bar Council has in the past criticised the decision by the police to disallow assemblies under Section 9(1) of the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012, stating the right to assemble peacefully is

provided in the Federal Constitution.

The constitutional right to assemble peaceably and without arms is guaranteed under Article 10(1)(b) of the Federal Constitution.