

**Govt Decides Preacher Dr Zakir Naik can continue with Ceramah in Melaka – DPM
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PUTRAJAYA, April 12 (Bernama) -- The government has allowed a preacher from India, Dr Zakir Naik to continue with his public talks in Melaka but will need to change the title of his talks, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also the Home Minister, said he had discussed with the Melaka Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Idris Haron for the talks to be continued using a different title.

On the directive by Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar yesterday that the talk scheduled for April 17 at the Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UteM) be cancelled, he said the decision was made after the police had received complaints from various parties.

"The complaints were not only made by Hindu religious leaders but also Islamic religious leaders," he told a media conference after attending the Islamic Consultative Council (MPI) Laboratory Panel at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC), here today.

Khalid was yesterday reported to have directed the cancellation of the forum entitled 'Similarities Between Hinduism and Islam' in Melaka so that public order and religious sensitivity in the country were not jeopardised.

Ahmad Zahid said following a compromise from the organisers, the government decided otherwise today as it felt that religious events should be encouraged and welcomed.

Asked whether the organisers should inform the authorities such as the police and the religious department before holding such programmes, he said basically the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim) should be informed.

"That is our stand...and it is also a guide to the KDN (Home Ministry) where the implementing agency is the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM)," he said, adding that the ministry was not informed of the title before it became a controversy.

To avoid a repeat of the incident, Ahmad Zahid suggested that the organisers of any public ceramah, especially those involving foreign speakers, to inform Jakim beforehand on the title and topic of discussion.

On the perception of certain groups that Dr Zakir himself was the source of the controversy, Ahmad Zahid said everyone should be open-minded and welcome it in the name of knowledge seeking.

Meanwhile in MELAKA, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Idris Harun said the cancellation of the talk by Dr Zakir scheduled to be held at the Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) on April 17 had nothing to do with the Melaka state government.

He said the state government had no objection to the programe being held even though the

organisers had not informed the state government officially about it.

"The state government had never rejected the programme, there was probably an oversight on the part of the organisers to contact the state government initially.

"I personally know Dr Zakir Naik as a speaker with vast knowledge and expertise on religion. In fact, besides imparting his knowledge, he is a well-known welfare activist worldwide," he told reporters here today.

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