

Najib gags ministers on sports betting?

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A highly-anticipated press conference today by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom over the sports betting controversy was today cancelled, prompting speculation that there was a gag order on the topic.

NONEJamil Khir's press conference was scheduled for 11.15am before the launch of a new mosque in Putrajaya. He was expected to issue a statement as the minister in charge of Islamic affairs.

After about 40 reporters, including those from international wire services, waited at the venue for about 45 minutes, one of Jamil Khir's aides appeared and announced that the press conference had been cancelled.

"The prime minister does not want anyone else talking about it. He will issue a public statement himself later on," she said without elaborating further.

Had the press conference proceeded as scheduled, Jamil Khir would have been the first cabinet minister to speak on the matter officially, after much stonewalling by government officials.

Big question mark

The issuance of the sports betting licence has been a big question mark especially after the government had appeared to backtrack on its decision.

Purportedly issued to Berjaya Corporation's Ascot Sports Sdn Bhd, the company had claimed that they received a letter of approval dated January this year to conduct sports betting.

They had also reiterated the claim in their announcement to Bursa Malaysia on May 12, stating the proposal for Berjaya Corporation to acquire 70 percent of Ascot Sports.

However, in a written parliamentary reply to Batu MP Tian Chua, Najib said that the government has yet to decide on issuing the licence, pending "public feedback".

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