

**Rais defends decision, says Badu row won't affect Malaysia**  
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**By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 1 — The cancellation of US songstress Erykah Badu's concert yesterday over a controversial photograph will not affect Malaysia's image internationally, the government said today.

Information, Communications and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Rais Yatim defended his decision in mooting the cancellation, stressing that the "observation of each countries' sensitivities should be the top priority."

"There are many considerations pertaining to Malaysia," he told reporters here.

The minister confirmed that Badu had made attempts to contact him for a one-on-one meeting over the matter, but said that his busy schedule prevented the meeting.

Rais (picture) responded to Badu's Twitter handle @fatbellybella at 6.22 this morning.

"@fatbellybella are u still in KL? Schedule was very tight yesterday and last night. I m at RHH this morning. Myb can meet there. Reply ASAP," he said.

"She indicated for a meeting and last night (but) we were involved in various activities.

"I wish I can meet her today. But I have to be participating in this conference and cannot be tweeting. Hopefully we can continue the association later," he said before leaving the press conference.

The Umno minister refused to state whether she would be allowed to perform here in the future.

Badu had to cancel her show after a picture of her sporting "Allah" tattoos was published by The Star.

Rais had said the act of showing the "Allah" symbol and "Nabi Muhammad SAW" for entertainment purposes was unacceptable by Muslims.

The American R&B songstress, in a press conference yesterday, said she respected the government's decision but expressed disappointment that her show had been cancelled over The Star's picture of her.

The leading English newspaper yesterday suspended two senior editors indefinitely — Star2 senior editor Lim Cheng Hoe and deputy editor for features Daryl Goh — for approving Badu's picture.

They also appointed two Muslim associate editors to "assist and guide" the newspaper on issues of Muslim sensitivities.

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