

BN ministers end feud over tourism tax

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Works minister Fadillah Yusof says the issue was raised at yesterday's Cabinet meeting and it has been resolved but he didn't elaborate.

PETALING JAYA: Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders and Tourism and Culture Minister Nazri Aziz have ended their heated public dispute over the tourism tax, Works Minister Fadillah Yusof has declared.

He said the issue was raised at the Cabinet meeting yesterday and "it has been resolved", he told reporters when met at a function here.

However, he did not elaborate.

Fadillah, who heads the youth wing of Sarawak's dominant BN party PBB, was among those who reprimanded Nazri for his "harsh statement" against a Sarawak minister who objected to the implementation of the tourism tax.

Sarawak Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports Minister Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah had called the new tourism tax a glaring example of the federal government imposing tax laws in Sarawak without consulting the state.

Nazri retaliated by telling Karim to watch his mouth before making statements against the federal government, and accused the latter of being "inexperienced", "ignorant" and "a gangster".

The comments drew condemnation from Sarawak and Sabah politicians on both sides of the political divide, including by Nazri's Cabinet colleague, Sabah's Kota Belud MP Abdul Rahman Dahlan, who leapt to Karim's defence.

Fadillah said the dispute had not affected his relationship with Nazri and denied that there was ever a spat to begin with.

"It's merely a case of differing views. That's all," he said.

He added that Sarawak chief minister Abang Johari Openg had also met with Prime Minister Najib Razak to discuss the matter.

Meanwhile, the New Straits Times reported that Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said Najib had called for an end to the arguments.

“In the (Cabinet) meeting, we also agreed that no statements will be issued by any leaders from the federal and state governments on the matter (tourism tax),” he was quoted by the English daily as saying.

The new tourism tax will kick in on July 1 with hotels nationwide being forced to charge from RM2.50 to RM20 per room night.

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