

PAC hearing on NFC stymied by tight-lipped GM
MalaysiaKini.com
March 20, 2012
By Hazlan Zakaria

The parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) hearing on the National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) ran into an unexpected obstacle today as the company's representative called before the committee today kept mum on the advice of her lawyers.

"Wan Zurina Saaran is the human resources general manager and she was accompanied by two lawyers.

"The lawyers did most of the talking and they cited that as it might incriminate their client. They instructed her not to answer the questions," PAC member Kota Belud MP Abdul Rahman Dahlan told reporters outside the MPs' lounge.

NONERahman (right) said the PAC then argued that the NFC general manager could choose which questions to safely answer, recounting similar options the committee had given to former transport minister Chan Kong Choy, when asked to appear during the committee's probe into the Port Klang Free Zone.

The lawyers then argued that their client was there not on the direct invitation of the committee, but was asked to attend by the Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Ministry, and as such, Wan Zurina need not have to answer to the committee.

"We shall write another letter, to issue an invitation to attend directly from the PAC to NFC," Rahman said, adding that this would take some time, before the panel could reconvene.

The 9am PAS session lasted over half-an-hour and was cut short as the committee had to look to writing another invitation to the NFC official.

NFC plays 'subjudice' card

Meanwhile, NFC's public relations consultant said in a statement the NFC legal team attended the PAC on behalf of the company chairperson, because the latter is currently involved in ongoing charges in court.

"NFCorp lawyers informed the PAC that the executive chairperson regretfully could not accept the invitation from the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industries to appear before the PAC, in view of the pending charges, as the subject matter is sub judice," says the brief statement issued this afternoon.

NONEWan Zurina, a spokesperson for NFC, had issued several statements for the company in its handling of a public relations fallout, following the scandal that hit the firm owned and operated by family members of federal minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

NFC took centre-stage after the Auditor-General's 2011 audit report revealed several irregularities in its operations, which the federal opposition pounced upon and followed up with financial details it claimed revealed mismanagement and misappropriation of RM250 million in public funds that the government loaned to the company.

Details of condos and other luxury properties bought by the company, both in the country and abroad, came under the microscope as allegations were made of funds siphoned out of the company by its directors.

Its chairperson, Mohd Salleh Ismail, who is Shahrizat's husband, has been charged in court with two

counts of criminal breach of trust and another two counts of breaching the Companies Act 1965.

More individuals are said to be in the sights of authorities as charges are being prepared against others involved in the handling of the government loan.

Shahrizat has announced that she will not accept nor seek to be reinstated as both senator and federal minister when her term ends in April.

However she intends to retain her party post as Umno Wanita chief, amid mixed views from the movement and despite some wanting her to withdraw as the women's wing head as well.

The PAC probe into the NFC came after a public outcry following revelations of alleged misappropriations of funds given to the publicly-funded project that was supposed to develop and uplift Malaysia's cattle industry.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/192573>

