

PKR's Rafizi arrested, charged under Bafia

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By Hafiz Yatim

PKR director of strategy Mohd Rafizi Ramli has been charged in the Shah Alam Sessions Court with disclosing four financial accounts related to the National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) and its chairperson Mohd Salleh Ismail.

He claimed trial to the charge, under Section 97 of the Banking and Financial Institutions Act (Bafia), of having disclosed the financial accounts held by Public Bank to two reporters, one of them Erle Martin Carvalhoe of Star.

The accounts were identified as the customer profiles of NFC, Meatworks and Livestocks Sdn Bhd, Agrosience Sdn Bhd and Mohd Salleh.

Rafizi is alleged to have disclosed the accounts at the PKR headquarters in Tropicana on March 7 this year.

The prosecution led by DPP Nahra Dollah applied for Rafizi's passport to be surrendered to the court as this is a non-bailable offence.

Lawyer N Surendran submitted that Rafizi is a public figure who is unlikely to abscond.

"He is married and has children and two elderly parents in Terengganu. I submit that bail is merely to secure attendance and not to burden the accused," said Surendran who is also PKR vice-president.

He appeared with Puspavathi Rosman for Rafizi and the second accused, former Public Bank clerk Johari Mohamad who was charged with abetment under Section 112(1)(c) of Bafia.

Both are liable to a jail term of three years or a RM3 million fine if convicted.

Judge Aslam Zainuddin fixed bail at RM15,000 with one surety, and fixed mention of the case on Sept 10.

Rafizi was arrested early today by five police personnel and five Bank Negara officers, who arrived at his house in Bukit Antarabangsa at 6.50am.

"I am now arrested under (Bafia) and will be taken to court right now," he had said in a text-message to Malaysiakini at the time.

Rafizi was allowed time to have a shower, before he was escorted to the Hulu Kelang police station.

He arrived at the court about 9.20am, where the case was registered.

Kuala Selangor MP Dzulkefly Ahmad, PKR vice-presidents N Surendran and Nurul Izzah Anwar were among Pakatan Rakyat leaders present.

Timing questioned

Met when he arrived in court, Rafizi queried the timing of the action, since the Bafia probe had been carried out "a long time ago".

He posited that this could have something to do with his more recent revelations on the Ampang LRT extension project, as it was announced yesterday that the contract has been awarded to a consortium led by George Kent (Malaysia) Bhd.

"(Is it) mere coincidence that the contract for the Ampang LRT extension to George Kent was announced yesterday and I was picked up this morning?"

"Next week I will be facing the (hearing of the Shahrizat Abdul Jalil) defamation suit."

Shahrizat, is married to Mohd Salleh who runs NFC with their three children.

Rafizi speculated that the charge was framed under Bafia because the authorities "were unable to apply the Official Secrets Act".

Bank Negara started investigations after Mohd Salleh's police report against Rafizi for 21 alleged breaches of private and confidential banking details that are protected under Part XIII of Bafia on secrecy and information.

Mohamad Salleh himself has been charged with two counts of criminal breach of trust (CBT) and two alleged offences under the Companies Act 1965 involving a total of RM49.7 million, related to the purchase of two luxury condominium units.

NFC had received a RM250 million soft loan for the National Feedlot Centre project to produce beef, but the auditor-general found that targets were not being met.

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