

PM pooh poohs charges of Felda mismanagement
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Prime Minister Najib Razak has rubbished outright allegations of mismanagement at Felda reserves, dismissing them as deceitful.

"There are a lot of untruths, half-truths and so forth," he said at a press conference before moving on to another matter.

He was referring to allegations of irregularities in the management of the Federal Land Development Authority or Felda, set up to promote land ownership and entrepreneurship among Malays, when fielding questions from reporters.

THE issue erupted when former deputy minister of land and cooperatives from 1999 to 2004, Tan Kee Kwong in an open letter claimed that Felda's reserves had plunged from RM4.08 billion in 2004 to RM1.35 billion in 2009.

This was later confirmed by Deputy Minister in Prime Minister's Department Ahmad Maslan, but had refuted claims that mismanagement and abuse of power were to blame for it.

While in Parliament, he said that the difference was used for welfare purposes - RM2 billion for replanting crops, RM603 million for interest-free housing loans, RM253 million for the Sabah poverty eradication fund and RM662 million for the new Felda headquarters.

However, the answers failed to impress Klang MP Charles Santiago (above) who lodged a report at the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) yesterday.

Najib defends Bakke

Najib was also positive on Sime Darby Berhad's freshly-minted group chief executive officer and president Mohd Bakke Salleh, the former Felda managing director.

Amidst the unending barrage of criticisms against Bakke, Najib defended the appointment saying that Bakke has "what it takes".

"NONE" Bakke's track record, shows he has what it takes to bring Sime Darby back into shape," he said when speaking to reporters after launching PPP's 57th AGM this morning.

Najib also said that the appointment was done professionally with a lot of thought invested in the process.

"This is the process in the Sime Darby board of directors. They have used headhunters to ensure professionalism. We also cannot let the vacancy prolong in Sime Darby. If the vacancy had not been filled, people would have said that the directors are being indecisive. If too soon, people would say that it was too rushed.

"I don't think there was any rush at all," he said.

Bakke was roped in to replace Ahmad Zubir Murshid, who was asked to go on leave last month after it was revealed that several mega-projects, including the Bakun hydro-electric dam, had caused the GLC to suffer cost overruns to the tune of RM964 million.

However, some, including former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad had speculated that the figure could be a lot higher.

Mohd Bakke, 56, had served in several government-linked companies and investment companies previously.

Parliament move under study

Meanwhile, Najib also put to rest the confusion regarding the relocation of the Parliament House, saying that the government is still "studying the matter".

malaysia parliament parlimen building 050907 span"We have not made any decision. But we realise that whatever it is, public funds are involved. The funds have to be used in the best way possible.

"The problem is that the parliament building is too old. There are two choices at the moment: we can refurbish it, or move to PICC (Putrajaya International Conference Centre) while refurbishing the building," he said.

His statements contradicted the written reply of his minister Nazri Abdul Aziz two weeks ago to DAP Kota Melaka Sim Tong Him, saying that the cabinet had decided to move Parliament to Putrajaya, a plan that could cost RM800 million.

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