

## **Muhyiddin Should Answer Whether Decision To Award NFC Project Was Discussed During Cabinet Meetings**

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**By Lim Kit Siang**

The Minister of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Noh Omar has denied that the decision to award the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) project was discussed during Cabinet meetings.

He said: "I can confirm that NFC is under the High-Impact Projects Committee and at the time of the loan approval to NFC, that was not under the Cabinet, not (mentioned) in the meetings."

It's the Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who was the Agriculture Minister in 2006 and who was responsible for the approval of the NFC project, who should answer whether the decision to award the NFC project was discussed during Cabinet meetings as Noh Omar only became Minister after the March 2008 general elections – and whether it gave rise to "conflict-of-interest" situations involving the Minister for Women, Family and Community Development Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and her family responsible for the NFC project.

Muhyiddin should also explain whether he and his Ministry were aware of the involvement of Shahrizat's family when his Ministry made the NFC award.

As pointed out by the Auditor-General's Report 2010, approval of the NFC, which the National Feedlot Corporation's (NFCorp) website described as "a High-Impact Project under the Ninth Malaysia Plan...instrumental in attaining the 40% self-sufficiency for beef production by 2010", was approved way back in 2006.

The NFC has lived up to its reputation as a "high impact project" although in a very perverse manner, not in terms of fulfilling its objective to attain 40% self-sufficiency for beef production by 2010 but in raising the hosts of issues about government efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, transparency and integrity in the past month since the Auditor-General's 2010 Report focussed spotlight on its operations.

The controversial RM250 million "soft loan" to NFCorp, leading to the highly questionable purchase of two luxury condominiums completely at variance with the objective of NFC, is not the only public expenditure on the NFC project.

From 2007 to 2010, the government had spent RM48.71 million to develop the project. The government has also given a RM13 million launching grant to NFCorp.

This means that the total public outlay in the controversial NFC project exceeded RM300 million.

Two days ago, the NFCorp executive chairman Dr. Mohamad Salleh Ismail finally broke the 23-day silence of NFCorp but instead of being the last word to end the raging RM300 million NFC scandal, Salleh has opened up a Pandora's Box raising even more questions waiting to be answered.

For instance, although Salleh claimed that NFCorp started in 2009, in actual fact it was offered to be the NFC Integrator on 27th October 2006 and as stated by the website of Real Food Company (one of the subsidiaries of NFCorp) on the launching of Gemas Gold Meats as Malaysia's

"premium brand of quality meats"

"A range of chilled beef products wholly produced by National Feedlot Corporation (NFC), Gemas Gold Meats has been penetrating into the market since 2008 under the house brand of NFC. This was done while building operations integrity, gain consumer confidence and establish a larger customer base."

Salleh disputed the Auditor General's 2010 Report which criticised the NFC as "a mess", pointing out that it had failed to achieve the 2010 production target of 8,000 head of cattle – with only 3,289 head of cattle or 41.1 per cent of the target set.

It is not surprising that Salleh contested this but what is astonishing is that the NFCorp executive chairman seems to have the support of the Muhyiddin and Noh Omar, with the latter even claiming that the NFC was a "success" despite the strictures of the Auditor-General's 2010 Report.

Malaysians would like to know from the Prime Minister, Najib Razak whether his slogan of "People First, Performance Now" has real meaning and whether he is on the same wavelength with the majority of people who are shocked by the RM300 million NFC scandal and want the Prime Minister to sternly and unequivocally dissociate himself from the "mess", whether on government efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, transparency or integrity questions.

#### **LIM KIT SIANG**

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