

Kit Siang wants Najib to pull RM181m NFC loan
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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 13 — DAP's Lim Kit Siang today urged Datuk Seri Najib Razak to step in and recall the RM181 million lent to Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil's family for a cattle farming project after it was revealed RM10 million was spent on a luxury condominium.

"Najib should intervene in the RM10 million 'condominium for cattle' scandal by recalling the RM181 million loan to [the National Feedlot Centre], which was not used for the purpose of cattle production.

"As shocking as the revelation about the RM10 million 'cattle for condominium' scandal is the self-righteous statement by the Minister for Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Datuk Noh Omar aiding and abetting a gross misappropriation of public funds," he said in a statement today.

Allegations of financial impropriety have dogged the company owned by Women, Family and Community Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Jalil's husband and children after the Auditor-General revealed last month that the NFC had failed to meet production targets for 2010, despite benefiting from a RM134.72 million soft loan from the government.

Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin had publicly defended the NFC's purchase of a RM10 million condominium in upscale Bangsar as a "strategic" investment.

Citing Noh, Lim today said something "is very wrong" about the "set conditions" imposed by the technical committee chaired by the Veterinary Department and the Finance Ministry for the release of the loans to promote cattle production that it could result in "excess funds" leading to the purchase of the luxury condominium in upscale Bangsar.

Noh previously claimed that once NFC received money from the government, it was considered the company's private funds and the government had no say as to how it would be used. He also denied the purchase of the condominium.

He said a total of RM250 million was earmarked for the NFC project and placed in a special loan account (SLA) in Maybank that was controlled by the Finance Ministry. RM181 million from that account has already been disbursed to NFC based on its claims, he explained.

"If the money has been paid to NFC after fulfilling set conditions, the government cannot control what NFC does with it, including purchasing the said condominium, because it is then considered the company's money.

"Claims made by NFC are related to farm management only, and has absolutely nothing to do with the purchase of condominiums," Noh was quoted as saying.

Lim said instead of expressing surprise and shock at the "misappropriation of the loans" for cattle production to purchase a luxury condominium, Noh had come out to defend the RM10 million "condominium for cattle".

"There is no word of censure, disapproval or dismay at such blatant misappropriation of public funds by the NFC especially as it involved the family of a Cabinet minister, which is particularly galling to ordinary Malaysians who are trying to make ends meet.

"Is this in fact a reflection that such misuse of public funds, where mega loans are given to companies whether run by family members of Cabinet ministers or cronies, are often misused for another purpose from the those originally approved, is very commonplace under the present administration?" he asked.

The Auditor-General's Report for 2010 released last month criticised the NFC for not meeting production targets, adding that the project was now "in a mess".

The report said production last year was only 3,289 head of cattle or 41.1 per cent of the target set for 2010.

PKR has alleged that the RM250 million soft loan was used to fund operations of associated companies also owned by Shahrizat's family, in violation of strict loan conditions.

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