

## **Ministers clear the air over allegations**

**New Straits Times**

**November 05, 2011**

**By Eileen Ng**

### **THE government this week set the record straight at the Dewan Rakyat over several allegations that had been levelled against it.**

First up was Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Noh Omar, who faced his detractors on Monday, as he stressed that the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) was not a failure.

Despite the grilling he received from the opposition bench, Noh stood his ground and insisted the Auditor-General's Report 2010 did not conclude the NFC as a failure.

Instead, he blamed the opposition media for misreporting.

"This has been politicised. The report is clear, the NFC is not a failure," he said when responding to points raised by members during the debate of the Supply Bill.

On the same day, Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek addressed the issue of the presence of an Israeli athlete at a Muay Thai competition held in Selangor recently.

Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan (BN-Kota Belud) had asked Ahmad Shabery to explain the issue due to a report in a news portal questioning why fighter Ilya Grad was allowed to enter the country despite Malaysia not having diplomatic ties with Israel.

Ahmad Shabery said Ilya was allowed in as he was participating in a sporting event.

Two days later, Ahmad Shabery held a press conference at the Parliament lobby after the issue did not abate.

"I was criticised in the online portals for apparently allowing this to happen, but for them to question me on moral grounds when it was the Selangor government which sponsored the event is unbecoming.

"The government does not practise a total boycott of Israelis.

"Even if the government does not have diplomatic ties with the country, there are certain instances when a citizen of Israel can enter with certain conditions imposed by the Home Ministry."

He added that Israelis could enter the country for sports, seminars, conferences or arts purposes. However, they have to adhere to conditions imposed by the Home Ministry.

On Wednesday, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz told the house that Malaysia's contract with the United Kingdom-based FBC Media consultants between 2007 and last year had boosted the country's image abroad and brought about better reception by foreign leaders.

He said the government paid FBC E19.6 million (RM84.2 million) for their services during the period, which helped Malaysia gain entry into important international forums, establish relationships with influential bodies and get international media coverage.

Nazri's reply received Datuk Mohamad Aziz's (BN-Sri Gading) support who accused the opposition of damaging the country's image and leaders by making negative comments.

The matter had become a fodder for the opposition and the online media, who criticised the government for engaging a foreign public relations firm to prop up its image abroad.

On Thursday, Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussein revealed that Bursa Malaysia and the Securities Commission were probing the Malaysia Airlines and AirAsia Bhd share swap exercise for insider trading.

This was after Wee Choo Keong (Independent-Wangsa Maju) repeatedly raised the matter in the house.

However, Awang Adek cautioned that investigations would take some time to complete because it involved numerous accounts and big amount of shares.

The house also got off to an exciting start this week when three members were ejected for refusing to obey the chair on Monday.

N. Gobalakrishnan (Independent-Padang Serai) was booted out during the morning's debate session until the house resumed sitting at 2.30pm while Er Teck Hwa (DAP-Bakri) and Lim Lip Eng (DAP-Segambut) were asked to leave for 25 minutes during the afternoon session.

Two days later, the house also rejected an opposition motion to dock Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's salary by a month or RM22,826.65. The motion, moved by Tian Chua (PKR-Batu), was defeated by voice vote after a 90-minute debate and verbal brawls between both sides of the house after Question Hour at 11.30am.

The Dewan Rakyat will resume its meeting on Tuesday after the Hari Raya Aidiladha holiday.

Copyright © 2011 The New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad.

Source: <http://www.nst.com.my/local/politics/ministers-clear-the-air-over-allegations-1.1213>