

Can Putrajaya clarify whose assets were frozen, Kit Siang asks
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 26 — DAP's Lim Kit Siang pushed the federal government to explain the prime minister's asset freeze announcement on the scandal-tainted RM336.64 million national cattle farming project.

The veteran lawmaker said that the government needed to clear the air over allegations of confusion between which NFC it had acted on, whether it was the national feedlot centre project, or the national feedlot corporation that it picked to run the operations.

"With the claim that the Auditor-General had confused the two entities, NFC and NFCorp, Malaysians want to know whether the freezing of assets announced by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak earlier this month was with regard to NFC or NFCorp or both," he said in a statement today.

"Who can give this clarification?" Lim (picture) pressed.

The Ipoh Timor MP denounced NFCorp chairman, Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh for fussing over "semantics" instead of taking responsibility for a multi-million ringgit national project using taxpayers money.

He said the husband to minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil deserved public censure for trying to divert attention by claiming that the Auditor-General had confused the two entities that share the same NFC initials, when Tan Sri Ambrin Buang had done no such thing in the 2010 audit report.

"Is Mohamad Salleh seriously claiming that the NFCorp owes no duty of public accountability and responsibility for any misuse of public funds given to NFCorp," he asked.

He pointed out the massive sums of money involved, from the RM73.64 million from the Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Ministry in development and operational costs to the RM13 million start-up grant approved to NFCorp in September 2007 and to the RM250 million soft loan awarded to the corporation in an agreement signed on December 2007.

Ambrin was reported saying again today that there were several weaknesses in the implementation of the feedlot centre project.

"Why else would the government have, in May 2009, postponed the implementation pending viability and business model studies on the centre?" he was quoted as saying today by The Star newspaper.

"Whether there are elements of misappropriation is for authorities like the police and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate," he was quoted saying, adding that his audit department made no mention of misappropriation of funds as it was beyond the scope of its powers.

Ambrin said the audit was to determine whether the centre had been carefully planned, prudently carried out and met its objective.

“Audit analysis showed the objective of the centre had not been fully met and this was due to various factors as explained in the Auditor-General’s Report 2010,” he said.

In his report, the project did not meet its production target of 38,600 head of cattle in 2010 because the Entrepreneur Development Programme involving 130 satellite farm entrepreneurs had not been implemented.

He also said NFCorp was a RM1 share registered company with the Ministry of Finance Incorporated, adding that the RM1.1 million in paid-up capital had been contributed by Agrosience Industries Sdn Bhd, owned by the Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Ministry.

The publicly-funded company hit the headlines following last year’s Auditor-General’s Report, and has continued to hog the limelight after it was linked to minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil’s family.

PKR has since made several revelations relating to the scandal, including NFCorp’s purchase of two luxury condominium units in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, and the alleged use of project funds to pay for Shahrizat and her family’s personal expenses.

The opposition party has also alleged that Shahrizat’s family used nearly RM600,000 from NFCorp’s funds to settle their credit card bills in 2009.

But the management of NFCorp has maintained that the credit card expenses were solely for business purposes.

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