

Don't sidetrack probe, TI-M tells NFCorp
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 27 — Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) slammed today the National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) for attempting to divert attention from investigations over allegations of abuse of public funds in the controversial RM250 million national cattle-farming project.

The graft watchdog said in a statement that the Auditor-General had only clarified that he did not call the project "a mess" but confirmed the project had not fulfilled its objectives for reasons including the failure of NFCorp, which belongs to the family of minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, to meet obligations.

"The NFC should not divert attention from the investigations being carried out by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and the police to determine if there was any misuse of public funds that were meant for the feedlot project.

"The recent statements on what words were actually used in the A-G's report should not distract attention from... whether public funds for a national project were being used for other purposes," said TI-M secretary-general Josie M. Fernandez (picture).

NFCorp, which was awarded the project in 2006, had thanked Auditor-General Tan Sri Ambrin Buang yesterday for clarifying that he had not called the company a "mess" in his 2010 report, saying the explanation would help strengthen public perception of its operations.

The company said the Auditor-General's statement on Friday would help put to rest months of "tireless bashing from hardline critics" against NFCorp, which operates the scandal-ridden National Feedlot Centre (NFC) project.

The RM250 million federally funded cattle-farming project was first coined a "mess" in an article in English daily The Star after it made it into the pages of the A-G's 2010 Report.

The term was later repeatedly reused by various media organisations to describe the NFC after PKR launched a series of exposes to prove the project's funds were being abused.

PKR had claimed that at least RM27 million was used for land, property and expenses not related to cattle farming by Wanita Umno chief Shahrizat and her family.

But the women, family and community development minister has sued PKR's strategic director Rafizi Ramli and Wanita chief Zuraida Kamaruddin over the claims.

She is due to return to ministerial duties next week after taking three weeks' leave to facilitate investigations.

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