

NFCorp rubbishes abuse claims, says loan must be repaid
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 27 — The National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) rubbished today claims it misappropriated public funds, stating that its RM250 million government loan must be repaid else “we will be declared bankrupt or locked up in jail”.

Executive director Wan Shahinur Izmir Salleh said at a briefing organised by a group calling themselves the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs that “stories saying we are getting free money are unreasonable.”

“RM250 million is a big amount. If we play around without direction, my children’s future will be destroyed. For centuries, we will be saddled with debt,” he said, looking uncomfortable in front of attendees and reporters who had waited for two hours for him to arrive.

“The loan agreement has been signed. If we don’t pay back, we will be declared bankrupt or locked up in jail. We will pay every sen plus interest. The question of misappropriation does not arise,” Izmir, who is Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil’s son, said.

After speaking for just 20 minutes, Izmir refused to field questions from reporters.

“I am sorry I cannot address the media today. I only came to explain matters to the NGOs,” he said before leaving in his SUV.

NFCorp, which is owned by Shahrizat’s family, had its assets frozen recently to facilitate investigations by police and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) into allegations of breach of trust in the national cattle farming project.

This came after a series of exposés by PKR, which claimed at least RM27 million was used for land, property and expenses unrelated to cattle farming by Wanita Umno chief Shahrizat and her family.

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

Earlier today, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin also rejected calls from the opposition for a royal commission of inquiry into the scandal by saying the police and MACC were capable of handling the matter.

The RM250 million federally-funded cattle-farming project was first coined a “mess” in an article in a local daily 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 exposés to show the project’s funds were being abused.

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.

Shahrizat returns to ministerial duties on February 6 after taking three weeks' leave to allow authorities to complete their probes.

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