

NFC-linked supermart kicked out of Singapore mall
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 — Singapore's Rochester Mall has turfed out its planned anchor tenant Farmhouse Supermarkets as the store, linked to the family of Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil in the ongoing National Feedlot Centre (NFC) scandal, was unable to get its operations ready in time.

The opposition had accused Shahrizat's (picture) family, who are alleged to have abused a RM250 million federal loan given to their National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp), of using the funds to finance personal business ventures as well as to purchase land and property unrelated to cattle farming.

"We have terminated the lease of Farmhouse Supermarkets and are in the process of getting new tenant(s) for the vacated retail space," Singapore's The Straits Times quoted a spokesman for Singapore-listed United Engineers, the project's owner, as saying.

The supermarket was to occupy the entire second floor, spanning more than 25,000 sq ft, of the mall at the one-north precinct in Buona Vista.

PKR had claimed that rental alone for the venture would have cost RM2.2 million a month.

But NFCorp chairman Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail explained that the publicly-funded cattle-rearing firm was building up the market in Singapore and would likely do the same in Indonesia in future but did not comment directly on Farmhouse Supermarkets.

Salleh, who is Wanita Umno chief Shahrizat's husband, pleaded not guilty on Monday to criminal breach of trust and violating the Companies Act in relation to RM49 million in federal funds given to manage the NFC project in a scandal that has opened the Barisan Nasional (BN) government to damaging attacks ahead of elections expected soon.

This was after Shahrizat said on Sunday she would quit as women, family and community development minister when her senatorship ends on April 8.

Her resignation came after 4½ months of being dogged by allegations that she and her family used public funds to finance over RM62 million of land, property and expenses unrelated to cattle farming.

The DAP has also accused NFCorp directors of cashing out RM12 million from the federal loan by channelling it through one of their companies in Singapore.

NFCorp, tasked with running the national cattle farming scheme, is headed by Shahrizat's husband and their three children. The NFC project in Gemas, Negri Sembilan, was awarded to the company in 2006 when Shahrizat was in Cabinet.

She had previously resisted calls from the opposition as well as Umno veterans such as Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to quit, stressing that she was "only the wife" of Salleh and had nothing to do with the embattled entity.

NFCorp hit the national headlines after it made it into the Auditor-General's Report last year for missing production targets.

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