

NFCorp's Kazakhstan base 'ludicrous', says Pua
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By Yow Hong Chieh

KUALA LUMPUR, March 8 — Tony Pua today questioned the justification for National Feedlot Corporation's (NFCorp) venture into Kazakhstan, noting that it exceeded the cattle-rearing company's mandate from the government.

The DAP publicity chief pointed out that the publicly-funded NFCorp was given a RM250 million soft loan by Putrajaya to establish and run the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) for the purpose of fulfilling local demand for beef.

This was defined in the loan agreement between the government and the firm, as previously disclosed by Pua (picture).

"While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with cattle imports as a business in Malaysia, the purpose of the RM250 million government loan is clearly not intended for such purposes...

"Based on the loan agreement, NFCorp is certainly not meant to be raising cattle in, or acquiring meat from Kazakhstan, much less buying an 'apartment' there," he said in a statement, adding that the property buy was "ludicrous".

The Malaysian Insider reported yesterday that commercial crimes police are now investigating NFCorp's purchase of a RM1.7 million apartment in Kazakhstan for use as an office.

It is understood that the property, which is located in the southern city of Almaty, was bought in September last year, just a few months after the company signed on to help the Kazakh government breed cattle.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was inked in June 2011 between NFCorp and the Jambyl district of Kazakhstan to raise cattle for export to Malaysia and neighbouring countries.

The deal was one of five signed between Putrajaya and Astana. Malaysia had also pledged to invest in an Islamic bank, oil and gas exploration by state oil company Petronas, energy generation as well as the construction of a hotel.

Pua called on NFCorp to disclose the full purchase price of the apartment as well as the current status of the property and whether it was registered to individual directors or the company.

He also urged the Finance Ministry to reveal if it had endorsed the acquisition and asked what action would be taken to protect Malaysian taxpayers should the purchase be deemed "highly improper".

"If NFCorp refuses to answer the above questions, then surely Datuk Seri Najib Razak, as the Minister of Finance and the governing authority over the RM250 million soft loan must surely respond over the preposterous scandal.

“The prime minister has no right to talk about transformation, fighting corruption and ending political patronage if he does not even have the steel and ability to act tough on those who abuse power,” he said.

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

The publicly-funded company is run by Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail, the husband of federal minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Jalil, and their three children.

NFCorp has been repeatedly accused by the opposition of using its RM250 million soft loan from government for purposes unrelated to cattle farming.

These include the purchase of multi-million ringgit luxury condominium units in Bangsar and Singapore as well as land in Putrajaya.

Questions have also been raised about NFCorp’s Singaporean operations — which allegedly includes a supermarket — that Salleh has said is necessary as the local market cannot support the company’s beef production.

PKR and the DAP, however, have said that the company’s overseas venture makes no sense in light of its federal mandate to fulfil up to 40 per cent of Malaysia’s demand for beef by 2015.

Police recommended last month that the Attorney-General charge NFCorp’s directors for criminal breach of trust, but the A-G has asked the police to conduct further investigations.

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