

MACC intimidating Shamsubahrin's lawyers, say Bar Council
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KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 23 — The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) demand for Datuk Shamsubahrin Ismail's lawyers to be questioned in its probe of the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) is "tantamount to intimidation", the Malaysian Bar said today.

Bar Council president Lim Chee Wee said the graftbuster's actions interfered with a lawyer's obligation to act without fear or favour for their client and threatened the Bar's independence.

He pointed out that it was recognised internationally that lawyers fulfil a vital function when they act for their clients in the interest of justice, as per Article 16 of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

MACC's demands also "made a mockery" of solicitor-client confidentiality, by which all lawyers were bound, Lim noted.

"The Malaysian Bar urges MACC to give due recognition to the right of access to legal representation, which is a fundamental tenet of the Rule of Law and should be an unfettered right that can be freely exercised in any democratic society.

"We also call for MACC to withdraw its notice to the lawyers to attend for questioning, and to respect the principle that lawyers must be allowed to discharge their professional duties without interference," he said in a statement.

Earlier this week, two of Shamsubahrin's lawyers had been summoned by MACC as witnesses for being present with their client during questioning.

The notice was served to Latheefa Koya and Murnie Hidayah Anuar after they accompanied Shamsubahrin to Putrajaya MACC where he gave his statement to anti-corruption officers.

Shamsubahrin is charged with cheating National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) chairman Datuk Seri Mohamed Salleh Ismail.

Salleh is chairman of NFCorp, which is at the centre of a scandal involving alleged abuse of RM250 million in government loans. He is husband to federal minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Jalil.

Salleh was charged earlier this month with criminal breach of trust and violating the Companies Act after he allegedly used the cattle-rearing firm's federal loan for personal expenses.

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

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