

MACC says summoned Shamsubahrin's lawyers to help NFC probe
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24 — The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) denied today intimidating Datuk Shamsubahrin Ismail's lawyers and insisted they were called in for questioning to help in its probe of the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) scandal.

The Bar Council said yesterday the anti-graft body's move was "tantamount to intimidation" and called for the summons to be withdrawn as it interfered and "made a mockery" of solicitor-client confidentiality.

"MACC have clear reason and strong justifications for calling both parties in helping us in the investigation. It's not the intention of MACC to intimidate anybody in the process of our investigation," the graftbusters' corporate communications chief Azmi Alias said in a statement.

Azmi said in the emailed statement that the matter has been brought to the attention of the Attorney-General and the MACC's Anti-Corruption Advisory Board.

"The Attorney-General has promised to discuss the matter with the Bar Council. The Anti-corruption Advisory Board has advised MACC to have special discussion with the Bar Council on the rationale of calling these witnesses," he said.

But Azmi did not confirm if the MACC would meet the Bar Council or give any further details on such a discussion.

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 but he in turn accused the company of making him a scapegoat when he refused to bribe police.

Salleh is chairman of NFCorp, which is at the centre of a scandal involving the alleged abuse of RM250 million in government loans.

He is husband to federal minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, who announced on March 11 she would quit the Cabinet when her senatorship ends on April 8.

Salleh was charged earlier this month with criminal breach of trust and violating the Companies Act after he allegedly abused RM49 million in public funds meant for the NFC cattle-farming scheme.

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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