

Rafizi should have brought NFC details to MACC, says Najib
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 3 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak today deflected criticism from the charging of Rafizi Ramli for the latter's expose on the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) scandal, saying the PKR leader could have gone to the rightful authorities with his revelations instead of the public.

The prime minister pointed out that anyone with such information should reveal these to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) as it could otherwise contravene the Banking and Financial Institutions Act (BAFIA).

Rafizi, who is PKR's strategy director, was charged on Wednesday with violating the Act by exposing confidential banking details of the National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp), the firm that runs and operates the NFC, a federally-funded cattle farming scheme.

"The reason why BAFIA is there is to protect the integrity and credibility of our financial system because anyone who has an account in the financial system must feel well-protected.

"Otherwise, people won't put money into the system, people from overseas won't put money into the system and that is against public interest," Najib told a press conference today after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting.

When asked if Rafizi's charges would affect the public's perception on the government's sincerity to weed out corruption, Najib said "it is not a question".

He said it was in the interest of the public that authorities ensure that the integrity of the country's financial system was not compromised.

"But it does not mean we will condone money laundering or corruption... because you can always reveal those information to the appropriate authorities," he pointed out.

Rafizi's charges under Section 97 (1) of the BAFIA stated that the PKR leader had disclosed four customer account profiles detailing the balance summary for the NFCorp, the National Meat and Livestock Sdn Bhd, Agrosience and Industries Sdn Bhd and NFCorp chairman Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail, to two individuals identified as Yusuf Abdul Alim and Erle Martin Carvalho.

Under Section 103(1)(a) of the same law, he could be fined a maximum of RM3 million and jailed up to three years if found guilty, which could seriously hobble Rafizi's chance of standing as a candidate in the 13th general elections that must be held by April next year when the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition's mandate expires.

In an immediate response, Rafizi and his allies in Pakatan Rakyat (PR) said the charges would likely frighten away whistleblowers from coming forward in the future.

PKR has also established a "National Oversight & Whistleblowers Centre" (NOW) to protect whistleblowers by offering legal and monetary aid.

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