

A-G on 'centre' of controversy

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS

mazwin@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: The Auditor-General reiterated that there were weaknesses in the implementation of the National Feedlot Centre.

However, he said his department made no mention of misappropriation of funds because it was outside its purview.

"Whether there are elements of misappropriation is for authorities like the police and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate," clarified Tan Sri Ambrin Buang.

He said the National Audit Department was called in to look at how the centre was faring since it

Ambrin throws ball at MACC to probe allegations

was set up in 2006 and not the National Feedlot Corporation.

"In the Auditor-General's Report 2010, nowhere were words like 'in a mess', 'in chaos' or 'misappropriation' used.

"These words were used by other parties and the department should not be held responsible," he added.

"From the auditing perspective, there were several weaknesses in the implementation of the project.

"Why else would the Government have, in May 2009, postponed the implementation pending viability and business model studies on the centre?" Ambrin said.

He said the audit was to determine whether the centre had been carefully planned, prudently carried out and met its objective.

He said the auditing had involved the scrutiny of information from the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry, Finance Ministry and government agencies such as the Veterinary Services Department as well as NFCorp officials.

"Audit analysis showed the objective of the centre had not been fully met and this was due to various factors as explained in the Auditor-General's Report 2010," he said.

Ambrin said the production target

of 38,600 head of cattle for 2010 had not been achieved because the Entrepreneur Development Programme involving 130 satellite farm entrepreneurs had not been implemented.

He stressed that the performance audit was done professionally and independently without prejudice to any party.

On NFCorp, Ambrin said it was a company registered under the Companies Commission of Malaysia with the Ministry of Finance Incorporated holding a golden share of RM1.

The paid up capital of RM1.11mil was contributed by Agrosience

Industries Sdn Bhd.

As at the end of 2010, the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry had spent RM48.71mil to prepare a 2,000ha site for the project. The size was later more than halved to 800ha.

Ambrin said a RM13mil launching grant was given to NFCorp in Sept 2007 to prepare infrastructure.

As at the end of 2010, RM6.52mil had been paid to the company for the construction of roads and cattle pens.

A soft loan of RM250mil was approved for NFCorp through an agreement signed in Dec 2007 and, as of March 2010, RM134.7mil had been released to the company based on claims made to the Finance Ministry.