

## **Shahrizat to step down next month**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**March 11, 2012**

**Nigel Aw**

Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said today she will cease to be a cabinet minister after her senatorship term expires in April but will continue as Umno Wanita chief and BN Wanita Chief.

The minister of Women, Family and Community Development said she will submit her resignation letter to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today and her resignation will take effect on April 8, a day before her term in the Dewan Negara expires.

"I have been thinking about this for a long time, I want to do the right thing. And that is to leave my post as a cabinet minister. The time has come," she said at a function organised by her ministry at Taman Desa, Kuala Lumpur.

Shahrizat who appeared calm and composed throughout the press conference, stressed that she she will remain in her party positions.

"After thinking at length about it, I will continue as Umno Wanita chief and BN Wanita chief."

According to reports, Shahrizat had wanted to resign as Umno Wanita chief but was convinced otherwise by its members, who had also made an appeal to the prime minister.

"I want to say clearly, this decision is my own decision," she said.

Asked if she was a casualty of the National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) scandal, she replied: "I want to say one thing very clearly, that I really have nothing to do with NFC."

She added that it was coincidence she was married to the NFC chairperson Mohamad Salleh Ismail.

"But as a responsible member of the government, I feel the right thing for me to do is for me to step down graciously," she said.

The announcement comes four months after the NFC, managed by her family, was accused of misappropriating RM250 million in government soft loans.

Following a series of exposes by PKR that the company had abused its government soft loan by purchasing luxury property and holiday trips, Shahrizat faced mounting calls including from within her party to step down.

Shahrizat's three children, Wan Shahinur Izran, Wan Izzana Fatimah Zabedah and Wan Shahinur Izmir are also members of the NFC's board of directors.

Queried if she will be contesting in the next general election, she replied: "We don't know what tomorrow will bring."

Final act

Surrounded by children and with a baby in her arms, Shahrizat thanked the government and her ministry for their support.

"In my 10 years of duty leading the ministry and the agencies below it, we have been able to bring changes particularly on matters relating to women, family, disabled persons, children, the elderly, and other issues regarding the welfare of the community," she said.

Following her low key announcement, Shahrizat said her final act as a cabinet minister would be to engage with NGOs to ensure that the Social Workers Act becomes a reality.

"I am glad that I have been given the chance to serve the people, this has given meaning to my life... it has been a joyful journey and I thank everyone in the ministry," she said.

A composed Shahrizat was later embraced by her fellow ministry members.

Speculation was rife that Najib was to announce Shahrizat's resignation in Johor yesterday, however, it was reportedly called off as the venue was deemed as improper.

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