

**Umno veteran: Shahrizat should quit Wanita post**

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**By Aidila Razak & Salhan K Ahmad**

Ideally, the best move for embattled cabinet member Shahrizat Jalil is to quit her Wanita Umno chief post as well and work to help Umno retain power from behind the scenes, says veteran journalist and politician Abdullah Ahmad.

NONEspeaking to Malaysiakini in an interview yesterday, Abdullah, who claimed to be among those who pushed for Shahrizat's appointment as minister, said the senator should return to the political frontline "only after the case is over".

"Shahrizat is very able, but unfortunately her family is involved in this (National Feedlot Corporation scandal), so she suffers as a result. I know her very well, like her very much and I really pity her.

"If I were Shahrizat, I will quit both posts," said the one-time Umno deputy minister and supreme council member.

However, Abdullah, who is seen as a close associate of former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and was a confidant of second premier Abdul Razak Hussein, said quitting now would be "too late" for Shahrizat, as the "damage has been done".

Shahrizat will be leaving her post as women, family and community development minister when her term as senator expires on April 8, but will remain as Wanita Umno chief – a post she was elected to.

NONElast Friday, dozens of Umno's women wing members attended a session with Shahrizat and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to show support for her.

However, Shahrizat has also been asked to leave by several of her Wanita Umno exco members, including vice head Kamilia Ibrahim, who claimed to be voicing the views of grassroots members.

"She should have quit and yet she can still lead Wanita Umno from behind the scenes," said Abdullah, who is better known as Dollah Kok Lanas.

"And when the case is over, and it is proven that she is not involved, of course she can return. Meanwhile, don't speak out too much. Live quietly. If she does, she'd invite more criticism."

'Every seat counts'

He said Umno could withstand any threat of boycott by the women's wing election machinery if Shahrizat was forced out, because the women's wing has traditionally been loyal.

NONE"Wanita Umno members are more loyal to the party than to individuals," he said.

Asked if Najib's appearance with Shahrizat would damage the prime minister's reputation as well, Abdullah said Najib may believe that he was on strong ground.

"Maybe the PM is confident that (his coalition) can win even with this Feedlot issue. But, it will determine whether he will win a majority of 20 seats, 30 or 40," he said.

He said that the National Feedlot Corporation scandal has been an "item of ridicule" (ejekan) and would be detrimental to the BN in the coming general election, where "(BN) needs every seat".

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