

'I didn't know hubby had bid for NFC project'

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By Hafiz Yatim

Testifying in her RM100 million defamation suit against two PKR leaders, Shahrizat Abdul Jalil has disclaimed any knowledge that her husband had put in a bid for the National Feedlot Centre project.

She is suing PKR director of strategy Rafizi Ramli and PKR Wanita chief Zuraida Kamaruddin over various comments that allegedly implicate her in the National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) Sdn Bhd fiasco.

Shahrizat had filed the suit on Jan 19 over Rafizi and Zuraida's revelations on the NFC that implicated her husband Mohd Salleh Ismail.

She told Judicial Commissioner Vazeer Alam Mydin Meera in the Kuala Lumpur High Court today that she does not hold any position in the NFC or in Agrosience Industries Sdn Bhd.

She claimed that Rafizi and Zuraida had used the issue as a primary target in attempting to discredit and malign her as a federal minister.

"These are personal attacks against me as a minister and Umno Wanita chief. You will find in most instances the defendants refer to the NFC as "Shahrizat's family-owned company" (in Malay syarikat milik keluarga Shahrizat), Shahrizat's husband-owned or the children's-owned.

"Along the way they have spun this whole story in their attempt to maliciously attack me in my standing as minister, Umno Wanita chief and BN Wanita chief," the 59-year-old politician and mother of three said in replying to questions from her counsel Muhammad Shafee Abdullah.

Shahrizat said she did not know that her husband had bid for the project as they are "worlds apart" in terms of career.

"No, I was not aware (of my husband's) bid. From the day we were married some 33 years ago, we respected each other's profession and did not interfere nor encroach in each other's work. We come from two different worlds professionally," she said.

"I am a lawyer have been a politician since 1995 after being elected as Lembah Pantai MP. I joined Umno in 1982.

"My husband is a scientist as he has been involved with project papers from the day we got married when he was a professor at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, a consultant with the Food and Agriculture Organisation and I do not get involved in his affairs... as I am a Wanita Umno chief, (was a) minister and BN Wanita leader."

'Hubby did not request assistance'

Describing the attacks on NFC as taking pot-shots at her, Shahrizat said these were meant to attack BN and Umno ahead of the 13th general election.

"I can confirm that neither my husband nor my children requested my assistance for this project. They know better than to ask me. I never participated in any way whether directly or indirectly to assist them in securing the project," said Shahrizat.

"I believe the opposition calculated and designed to make me the primary target of their attacks. It has never been about getting to the truth of the NFC matters. It is more their grand design to discredit and malign me as a politician, minister and BN leader.

"If you review the statements and allegations concerning the NFC, they are not interested in the response but more concerned to get my response as I happen to be married to the NFC chairperson. Why should I be held culpable on this ground at all?" she asked.

Zuraida stands accused of statements that implicate Shahrizat in the "mark up" of NFC meat products; influencing the cabinet decision to award the RM250 million soft loan to her husband; and abusing her powers as a federal minister.

Shahrizat is holding Rafizi to account for asking her to apologise to the public over 'serious legal or moral transgressions'.

Rafizi and Zuraida, who are in court, have filed a counter-claim against Shahrizat.

Others in the packed court room include Mohd Salleh, PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, vice-president Tian Chua, and secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

Scores of Wanita Umno supporters have shown up in support of Shahrizat, who heads the wing and was the women, family and community minister until she stepped down in April due to pressure from the NFC issue.

'Cleared by MACC'

Shahrizat said the assertions made by the two had painted a picture of her as being "a corrupt politician" and this had resulted in the MACC to probe her on allegations that she had abused her position as minister, and the political portfolios she held.

She said the opposition's hate campaign had resulted in her and her family making headlines almost daily for several months as they (Rafizi and Zuraidah) had sensationalised the matter to "become the talk of the town".

"It was a harrowing and heart-wrenching experience for me to be investigated by the MACC after almost 30 years in politics. As a cabinet minister, and Umno Wanita chief, I realised that by simply being investigated, my reputation was tarnished and damaged beyond repair.

"My integrity is of utmost importance but more so as a Muslim, I feel that I have been 'dizalimkan' (made a victim), 'dianiaya' (discriminated against) and 'diaibkan' (made a victim).

(humiliated) with baseless allegations, which is one of the most heinous transgressions against the principles laid down by God.”

She added that on May 31, after months of investigations, the MACC Operations Review Panel chaired by Hadenan Abdul Jalil cleared her as it found “there was no case against her”.

“Since then the case has been closed,” she said.

Shahrizat, a lawyer and former magistrate, is represented by Shafee and Ahmad Redza.

Ranjit Singh and J Leela are representing Rafizi, while Gopal Sreenevasan and Razlan Hadri Zulkifli are appearing for Zuraida.

Hearing before Vazeer continues on Friday.

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