

Shahrizat Returns From Leave Rearing More Monsters

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Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, the Wanita UMNO leader and Minister for Women, Family and Community Development, has returned from her three-week leave from Cabinet with all guns blazing but instead of slaying the ghost of the RM330 million “cattle condo” scandal, she has only reared more monsters.

When announcing her leave on January 12, Shahrizat said: “I hope the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) will be able to investigate whether or not I was involved in any of the decisions made by the government on the NFC in which my husband, Dr Mohammad Salleh Ismail, is the executive chairman.”

Has Shahrizat been cleared of any impropriety, abuse of power or conflict of interest in the RM330 million NFC “cattle condo” scandal by the MACC?

The answer is in the negative. As the purpose of her Ministerial leave has not been achieved, shouldn't her Cabinet leave be extended until a clear answer is available?

In the absence of any unequivocal exoneration by the MACC, the only alternative open to Shahrizat is to rebut one by one the many specific allegations of abuses of public funds or her knowledge/complicity, for instance allegations like the RM13.8 million used for purchasing luxury condominiums in Bangsar, RM10 million to purchase a luxury condominium in Singapore, RM3.4 million for plots of land in Putrajaya, RM830,000 for holiday trips, RM530,000 for a luxury car, payment of RM600,000 credit card bill for Shahrizat's family, etc.

Shahrizat has not done this but instead launched a deplorable and most unbecoming below-the-belt attack against Rafizi Ramli, PKR strategic director, who had led the three-month exposes of the RM330 million NFC scandal – further highlighting the weakness of her case!

What cannot escape attention of astute political observers is that Shahrizat had been abandoned by the UMNO leadership to fend on her own - in the face of increasing pressures for her to accept responsibility and resign from the Cabinet coming not only from her predecessor as Wanita Umno chief, Rafidah Aziz and her current Deputy Wanita Umno chief, Kamila Ibrahim but also different levels of UMNO leadership whether from former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir or Cheras Umno division head Syed Ali Alhabshee.

This reflects the growing impotence and isolation of Najib Razak as Prime Minister and UMNO President to provide the political leadership and set the political pace in UMNO and Barisan Nasional.

Just before the Chinese New Year, the MCA President Dr. Chua Soi Lek in an interview blamed the Barisan Nasional government, “particularly embattled minister Shahrizat Abd Jalil”, for the “poor handling” of the RM330 million “cattle condo” scandal, causing the public to perceive the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) project as “real rotten”.

Have the four MCA Cabinet Ministers the political courage to put things right by insisting at Wednesday's Cabinet meeting that Shahrizat should extend her Ministerial leave until she is cleared of any abuse of power and/or conflict of interest in the RM330 million NFC scandal, and better still, to ask for a full-scale Royal Commission of Inquiry into the NFC scandal?

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