

## **Will Shahrizat Return Triumphant Or Chastened?**

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Is the Minister for Women, Family and Community Development, Shahrizat Abdul Jalil returning to her first Cabinet meeting today after her three-week leave triumphant or chastened?

All the signs are that Shahrizat has returned from her three-week leave completely unrepentant about the RM330 million National Feedlot Centre/National Feedlot Corporation (NFC/NFCorpn) “cattle condo” scandal which had plunged the 34-month Najib premiership to the lowest point in terms of public accountability and integrity and threatened to topple Malaysia’s Transparency International Corruption (TI) Perception Index (CPI) 2012 next year to a new low in both CPI score and ranking – even lower than the deplorable 60th ranking and 4.3 score in TI CPI 2011.

Shahrizat came back from her leave even more combative and truculent, as if challenging not only her known public detractors but the unseen forces in UMNO and Barisan Nasional to a battle royale to force her to relinquish her positions in both government and party over the NFC scandal – as Cabinet Minister and Umno Wanita chief!

The Cabinet meeting today will be the national focus, whether the Prime Minister and the Ministers dare to state the obvious – that she should extend her leave as the rationale of her three-week leave to allow the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency (MACC) to clear her of any corruption, abuse of power or conflict of interests in the “cattle condo” scandal has not yet been achieved – or to be cowed by her triumphant return, although MCA President Chua Soi Lek had blamed her for the “poor handling” of “cattle condo” scandal, causing the public to perceive the NFC project as “real rotten”?

Shahrizat made a very unrepentant, defiant but eloquent retort in mid-December “Which UMNO leader does not have problem”, which probably explained why she felt she was in safe company and enjoyed both immunity and impunity for her role in the “cattle condo” scandal.

Can every Cabinet Minister publicly declare that he or she does not have similar problems as Shahrizat and does not have any next-of-kin, whether husband, wife, son or daughter who have taken massive government loans for whatever projects which were misused for purposes completely unrelated to the loan disbursement – like the purchase of luxury condominiums in Bangsar and Singapore, land in Putrajaya or holidays trips and family expenses when the RM250 million loan was to promote the country’s beef self-sufficiency?

The Cabinet today owes the nation a satisfactory explanation why after nearly four months of public expose or nearly seven months since the first submission of the Auditor-General’s Report 2010 which first threw light on the RM330 million “cattle condo” scandal, the Najib premiership is at a complete loss as to how to give a satisfactory accounting on the RM330 million “cattle condo” scandal?

Malaysians are shocked by the Malaysiakini report yesterday afternoon that the MACC had not yet interrogated Shahrizat over the “cattle condo” scandal.

Although the MACC Investigations Director Mustafar Ali revealed that the “cattle condo” case had been classified under Section 23 of the MACC Act for abuse of power which carries a maximum jail sentence of 20 years, he also admitted that Shahrizat had yet to be called in.

As Shahrizat had announced that she was taking three weeks leave to allow MACC to investigate and clear her name of corruption in the NFC scandal, one would have thought that the first thing she would have done when starting her three-week leave would be to visit the MACC to give a full statement to enable the MACC to clear her name. Why didn’t she do it?

And if Shahrizat did not volunteer to give a statement to MACC, why didn't MACC call her up so that it could clear Shahrizat of any corrupt wrongdoing in the NFC scandal?

It would appear that Shahrizat's three-week leave is nothing but a charade.

Malaysians still remember how initially, MACC refused to investigate the "cattle condo" scandal insisting that it was a police matter.

It was only as a result of nation-wide outrage that the MACC changed its tack and announced its own investigations.

MACC had seriously undermined its own credibility, integrity and professionalism when it fouled up the Teoh Beng Hock and Sarbaini death cases. It will completely destroy its reputation if it is unable to re-establish its credibility, integrity and professionalism in its investigations of the "cattle condo" scandal.

A former senior police officer, Mat Zain, who was the former KL city CID chief, had questioned in an open letter to the Inspector-General of Police the police's reluctance to act against Shahrizat's family in the NFC scandal, saying it should only take "hours" to determine if they had misused project funds for their umrah trips.

Mat Zain had also called on the Prime Minister to instruct the police, graftbusters and the Attorney-General to complete investigations into the NFC scandal within a fortnight.

Is there any Cabinet Minister who dare to ask Shahrizat to fully clear herself of any wrongdoing, whether abuse of power or conflict of interests, in the NFC scandal before she resumes her duty as Minister for Women, Family and Community Development?

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