

Shahrizat dodges NFC bribery query
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 12 — Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil refused today to comment on allegations of bribery involving the RM250 million National Feedlot Centre (NFC) project run by her family.

PKR had disclosed earlier today an email detailing how NFC's lawyer allegedly told the sender that an official in the company had been tricked into paying money to a "conman" to influence a police probe into the national cattle farming project.

"No, no, no, excuse me," the Wanita Umno chief said when told that PKR had made a new claim regarding NFC before telling reporters to go "makan."

PKR had claimed that the email was sent by a Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) advisory board member to a large private group on December 31, 2011, following a dinner with the NFC's lawyer.

According to the email, the lawyer told the advisory board member how the NFC official had been tricked into paying money to a "conman" — understood to be Datuk Shamsubahrin Ismail — to allegedly influence ongoing investigations by the police.

"He (the lawyer) told us about this conman's story, about how this sweet-talking guy managed to convince his desperate client to part with his money so that he can get the police to be 'less brutal' in their interrogation!"

"It's sad to see how stupid one can get when you are stuck 'between a rock and a hard place'!" the email said.

Shamsubahrin was recently charged with cheating NFC chairman Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail of RM1.76 million in fraudulent consultancy fees.

Mohamed Salleh, who is Shahrizat's husband, had earlier said Shamsubahrin was neither a relative nor has he ever been an NFC employee.

Police are probing the NFC for possible criminal breach of trust following PKR's allegations that at least RM27 mill in federal funds meant for the cattle raising scheme had been used to purchase land and property unrelated to cattle farming.

The opposition party first latched onto the issue after the NFC, which lists all three of Shahrizat's children as directors, made it into last year's Auditor-General's Report for failing to meet production targets.

PKR has since made several revelations relating to the scandal, including NFC's purchase of two luxury condominium units in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, and the alleged use of project funds to pay for Shahrizat and her family's personal expenses.

It also claimed there was a transfer of resources to unrelated companies in Singapore, as well as the purchase of a Mercedes-Benz CLS350 for RM534,622 and two plots of land in Putrajaya's Precinct 10 for RM3,363,507.

PKR further alleged that some RM10 million had been diverted towards the purchase of a luxury condominium unit in Singapore for Shahrizat's family.

Shahrizat (picture) has denied any wrongdoing and stated she is "only the wife" of the project's chairman.

The women, family and community development minister has faced calls to quit from within Umno including influential former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

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