

Muhyiddin praises Shahrizat's 'major sacrifice'
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 12 — Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin today commended Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil for her decision to yield her Cabinet post over the National Feedlot Centre scandal, describing the move as a "major sacrifice",

According to Bernama Online, the deputy prime minister described Shahrizat's decision as a difficult one given her position as a senior Umno leader.

"This is a major sacrifice from someone who is leading a party wing," Muhyiddin was quoted as saying by Bernama Online.

"Her decision to relinquish her (ministerial) post on that date is a magnanimous act driven by her responsibility to discharge the task and trust placed on her to lead the ministry during the period specified," he was further quoted.

Muhyiddin, who is also Umno deputy president, later expressed confidence that Shahrizat would continue to serve both country and party through her position as Wanita chief.

"I also believe Datuk Seri Shahrizat will continue to lead Wanita Umno in ensuring victory for the (Barisan Nasional) in the coming general election," he added.

Shahrizat said yesterday she would step down as minister for women, family and community development when her term as senator ends on April 8 after months of attacks from the opposition.

She will, however, remain the head of Wanita Umno.

Shahrizat's husband and chairman of the National Feedlot Corporation, Datuk Seri Mohamed Salleh Ismail, was charged today in the Sessions Court here with criminal breach of trust and violating the Companies Act in relation to RM49 million from federal funds given to the firm.

He pleaded not guilty to the CBT charge as well two counts under the Companies Act in the scandal that has opened Datuk Seri Najib Razak and the BN government to damaging attacks ahead of elections expected soon.

The authorities were forced, by public anger as a result of allegations made by opposition politicians, to investigate whether her family had used part of a RM250 million ringgit loan from the government to the NFCorp to buy condominiums both at home and abroad.

The scandal has highlighted the prime minister's stuttering reform efforts and the decision to sacrifice Shahrizat politically is seen as a damage control exercise as Najib is expected to call elections within the next few months.

The NFCorp mess is not the first corruption scandal to hit Najib and Umno, but the farmyard connection makes it a potentially damaging one because many ordinary Malaysians have a

better understanding of what allegedly transpired than more obscure financial matters.

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