

Shahrizat says to resign as minister on April 8
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By Yow Hong Chieh

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 — Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said today she will resign as women, family and community minister next month.

“On April 8, when my term as senator ends, I will step down as... minister,” she told reporters at Desa Water Park here.

“I want to thank Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, the deputy prime minister and my Cabinet colleagues for extending their cooperation to me in my capacity as minister.”

Shahrizat, who appeared calm and composed during the press conference, said however she will stay on as Wanita Umno chief, despite earlier speculation that she would also quit her party post.

“After much thought, I have decided to continue the task entrusted to me,” she said.

Shahrizat said she felt “blessed” that she had been given the opportunity to serve the people, especially the target groups under the ministry.

“They brought meaning to my life...,” she said while surrounded by children who benefited from her ministry’s 1 Malaysia Social Welfare Programme (KARISMA).

“It’s been a joyful journey for me and everybody concerned and I would like to thank all the NGOs under the ministry for being such good partners and I hope they will continue to give their support to the ministry.”

Shahrizat’s resignation comes following months of allegations that she and her family had used a RM250 million federal loan earmarked for the National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) to pay for personal expenses.

The cattle-rearing company is headed by her husband, Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail, and their three children.

It was tapped to run the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) in Gemas, Negeri Sembilan in 2006, when Shahrizat was in Cabinet.

The former Lembah Pantai MP previously resisted calls from the opposition as well as Umno veterans to quit, stressing that she was “only the wife” of Salleh and had nothing to do with the embattled entity.

Shahrizat repeated this point again when asked by reporters today if her decision to resign was linked to the controversy surrounding NFCorp.

“I really have nothing to do with NFC except that I’m married to the chairman of NFC. But

as a responsible member of the government, I feel the right thing for me to do is to step down.”

“I am not only a leader, I’m also a wife and mother as well. So I know what I have to do and I’m doing the right thing,” she said, adding that the decision to quit was her own.

NFCorp hit the national headlines after it made it into the Auditor-General’s Report last year for missing production targets.

Since then, the publicly-funded firm has been repeatedly accused by opposition parties of using its government soft loan for purposes unrelated to cattle farming.

These include the purchase of multi-million ringgit luxury condominium units in Bangsar and Singapore as well as land in Putrajaya.

Police recommended last month that the Attorney-General (A-G) charge NFCorp’s directors for criminal breach of trust, but the A-G has asked the police to conduct further investigations.

Shahrizat was appointed as women, community and family minister in 2001 and held the post until 2008, when she lost in the general election.

She was then appointed special advisor to the prime minister on women affairs and social development, before being reassuming her Cabinet portfolio a year later.

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