

Shahrizat to announce resignation today
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 — Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil will announce her resignation, likely from all posts, in a press conference later today.

The Malaysian Insider understands she will make an official announcement at a press conference here this evening.

When contacted, an aide of the Wanita Umno chief confirmed she will meet the media at 3pm at Desa Water Park.

"I can't say more. Just come for the PC and you'll find out," he said.

Umno's New Straits Times had reported this morning the women, family and community development minister will quit all her posts "in the next few days." The newspaper, quoting unnamed sources, said she told a close circle of executive council members on Friday she would step down as minister and Wanita Umno chief.

"Shahrizat told us she wanted to let go of both her posts. She was not happy with suggestions that she resign as minister but remain as Wanita Umno chief until the next party election.

"She sees no point in this. Therefore, she has made up her mind to relinquish both positions," the English-language daily quoted a state Wanita Umno chief as saying.

Another senior Wanita leader told the paper that an aide close to Shahrizat had informed some Wanita Umno members that she was going to resign yesterday.

"However, this did not happen. We are puzzled as her officer was very confident that an announcement was going to be made that day. Perhaps she is waiting for the right time," the NST cited the source as saying.

The Malaysian Insider understands that Shahrizat (picture) was due to make an official announcement last night but this did not transpire.

The NST also quoted other highly-placed sources as saying they were certain Shahrizat will not be fielded in the coming general election.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday that an announcement on Shahrizat's posts will be made later.

"There are all kinds of rumours. But we will make the appropriate announcement," the Umno president had said in Johor.

Speculation about Shahrizat's fate has intensified in recent weeks, 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.

NFCorp hit the national headlines after it made 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.

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