

Rafizi, Zuraida ordered to enter defence over Shahrizat suit
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 17 — The High Court here today ordered PKR strategic director Mohd Rafizi Ramli and Wanita chief Zuraida Kamaruddin to respond to a RM100 million defamation suit filed by Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil over the National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) controversy.

The women, family and community development minister had filed the suit against the two on January 19 for alleging she misused a federal loan meant for the National Feedlot Centre (NFC).

According to The Star, High Court judge Vazeer Alam Mydin Meera said both Rafizi and Zuraida had till March 9 to answer to the defamation suit.

Shahrizat's suit comes after months of allegations by PKR that she had abused millions in federal funds earmarked for the NFC to pay for personal expenses incurred by her and her family.

The cattle-raising scheme is headed by Shahrizat's husband, Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail, and their children.

The publicly-funded project, which hit national headlines following the Auditor-General's Report last year, has continued to hog the limelight after it was linked to Shahrizat's family.

The former Lembah Pantai MP has so far refused to heed calls from both the opposition and several Umno leaders for her to resign over the allegations of abuse in the national cattle farming project.

Rumours have been circulating that the senator would tender her resignation to Cabinet this week but a minister confirmed with The Malaysian Insider that she has not done so.

Earlier, de facto law minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said the National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) operated by Shahrizat's husband and three children had committed breach of trust by using the government loan meant for cattle farming to fund other purchases.

PKR has made several claims of abuse over NFCorp's federal loan, involving over RM62 million spent on land, property and expenses unrelated to cattle farming.

Shahrizat's son, Wan Shahinur Izmir Salleh, has insisted that the company decided it would make better use of the money by investing in property during a break in business operations due to the government's decision to suspend construction of an abattoir that would have been rented to NFCorp.

The government awarded NFCorp the project in 2006, when Shahrizat was holding the same Cabinet portfolio.

She applied for three weeks' leave from her ministerial duties last month after new allegations of bribery surfaced and resumed work on February 8. She was called in for questioning by the MACC on the same day.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin announced last month Putrajaya would appoint an auditor to scrutinise NFCorp's books in light of accusations made against the company but dismissed calls for a royal commission of inquiry into the NFC.

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