

**Shahrizat Remains As Wanita Umno Head - Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced that Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil remains as Wanita Umno chief.

Najib, who is also Umno president, said this was because Shahrizat was elected by the movement's members as their head.

"So, there is no reason for her to resign (as Wanita Umno head)," he told a press conference after attending a gathering of Wanita Umno members with the party president at Dewan Merdeka, Putra World Trade Centre, here Friday.

Najib said Shahrizat should not be sacrificed for mistakes not committed by her and nor proven yet in court.

He said Shahrizat's stepping down from her post as women, family and community development minister which would take effect on April 8, showed her willingness to bear a moral responsibility and it was a priceless gesture.

"She has taken the moral responsibility although there is no proof of any illegal deed on her part, but as the issue involves her family, she has taken that responsibility, a most honourable way to let go your position in the cabinet.

"Because the post of Wanita Umno head is an elected post and based on the principle that a person is innocent as long as there is no proof for an alleged offence, there is no reason for Shahrizat's Wanita Umno post to be sacrificed or she to let go of the post herself," he said.

On March 11, Shahrizat said she would step down from her ministerial post when her term as senator ends on April 8 but would remain as Wanita Umno and Wanita BN chief.

The issue of Shahrizat's resignation arose when her husband, Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail as the chairman of National Feedlot Corporation was charged with misappropriating a government allocation of RM250 for its beef production project.

On March 12, Mohamad Salleh pleaded not guilty in the Sessions Court to two charges of criminal breach of trust of RM49.7 million involving the purchase of luxurious condominium units and land, as well as two charges under the Companies Act.

On the call by Wanita Umno vice-chief Datuk Kamalia Ibrahim for Shahrizat to resign from the party wing's top post, in order to safeguard the credibility of the party, Wanita Umno, Barisan Nasional (BN) and the government, he said the issue had been resolved.

Najib said he, Muhyiddin and Tengku Adnan met both women leaders and the two agreed to cooperate and work as a team to achieve victory for Umno and BN in the coming general election.

He said Shahrizat and Kamalia promised to "turun padang" (go to the ground) with other Wanita Umno leaders, moving as a strong, cohesive unit in shouldering a big responsibility

that had been set by the party for the party wing.

Najib said the Wanita Umno members' determination could be seen in the pledge they made at today's gathering where they stated their willingness and high level of commitment to working very hard to ensure victory for BN in the coming elections.

"Wanita Umno pledged their support for my leadership and Muhyiddin's, as well as Shahrizat's, and to shoulder the responsibility of ensuring a big win for BN at the polls."

He said although there was the issue between Kamilia and Shahrizat, Wanita Umno's morale was still high and as strong and solid as the pledge they made to "turun padang" and work with both leaders as a team.

"We will ensure that they will work together as a team. It is important that Wanita as a wing is fully intact and able to function with full vigour and commitment," he added.

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