

Najib to reveal Shahrizat's fate 'at suitable time'
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak said this evening he will disclose whether embattled Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil will remain in government at “a suitable time.”

The women, family and community development minister was widely rumoured to announce her resignation today four-and-a-half months after first coming under fire over the award of the controversial RM250 million National Feedlot Centre (NFC) project to her family.

When quizzed by reporters in Pasir Gudang, the prime minister did not deny recent speculation over the Wanita Umno chief's future.

“I will make an announcement at a suitable time,” Najib was quoted by state news agency Bernama as saying with Shahrizat present at the press conference.

Bernama had reported earlier that Shahrizat was seen in deep discussion with Najib before meeting the press.

Najib's statement comes after months of allegations that Shahrizat 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 it into the Auditor-General's Report last year for missing production targets.

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

These include the purchase of over RM60 million in 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's term as senator, which allows her to hold her post in Cabinet, ends on April 8.

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