

**Najib says no need for Shahrizat to quit as Wanita chief**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 23 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak insisted today there was no reason for Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil to cease being Wanita Umno chief as there is no proof or charge of wrongdoing in the RM250 million National Feedlot Centre (NFC) scandal.

Although Shahrizat announced on March 11 she would step down as women, family and community development minister when her senatorship ends on April 8, the veteran politician said she would continue to lead the 1.3-million strong wing.

“This is the policy of Umno as something is not proven yet or there must at least be a charge. If not there is no need to give up,” Umno president Najib told a press conference today.

Shahrizat was called in for questioning by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) last month over allegations she and her family abused a RM250 million federal loan meant for the national cattle farming scheme but has not been hauled up to court. However, her husband Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail, who owns the National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) with their three children, pleaded not guilty on March 12 to criminal breach of trust and offences under the Companies Act in relation to RM49 million in public funds.

Najib also said he had met Shahrizat and her vice chief Datuk Kamilia Ibrahim and the duo had agreed to cooperate despite the latter recently calling for Shahrizat to relinquish leadership of the wing.

The Umno president's remarks today left open the possibility of Shahrizat contesting the next general elections or making a future comeback to revive her political career which had appeared earlier to have been buried by the scandal.

“Both leaders will cooperate fully after this as a united team. They will work effectively together as a team.

“Wanita Umno pledged to support Shahrizat,” the prime minister said at the press conference attended by both leaders as well as the party's top brass.

He was speaking after a closed-door session with several thousand from the ruling party's women's wing this evening turned into a show of strength for the embattled women, family and community development minister.

If there were supporters of vice Wanita Umno chief Datuk Kamilia Ibrahim, they were nowhere to be found at the Putra World Trade Centre today, as those wielding placards and banners were fulsome in their calls for Shahrizat to continue leading the 1.3 million-strong wing and representing it in Cabinet.

Kamilia had said earlier this week the public felt something was “morally and politically

wrong" with how the National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) was run and this was affecting preparations for a general election that must be called by May next year.

"People are poking fun at Wanita and calling us 'cows'. The Wanita grassroots are saying it's difficult to work (for the general election)... As a leader, we have to listen to what the grassroots are saying," she was quoted as saying.

Najib also shrugged off suggestions that Shahrizat's continued leadership of the wing would hurt Barisan Nasional's election preparations.

"It's okay. We have to be fair. She has already taken the moral responsibility to resign from Cabinet."

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