

Senatorships renewed for three ministers and Awang Adek
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 9 — Five senators were sworn in today including three ministers and Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Awang Adek Hussin, who admitted in December to receiving political contributions in his personal account.

Awang Adek: Denies wrongdoing.

Ministers in Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom as well as Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing Minister Datuk Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin were given another three years in Dewan Negara, where senators are allowed to be reappointed once.

An anonymous blogger TheWhistleblower711 had alleged that former Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Azalina Othman and Awang Adek received RM300,000 and RM100,000 respectively from Gerbang Perdana managing director Yahya Abd Jalil.

But both Umno leaders denied the claim, with Azalina stating that it was payment for the sale of a classic car and Awang Adek saying the cash was for social programmes in Bachok, where he is division chief.

Kelantan-based Awang Adek said he received cash from a "long-time donor" to fund "social programmes" such as tuition classes for poor students in the constituency where he was MP between 2004 and 2008.

But he denied allegations that the money was a kickback in exchange for government contracts.

"I accept all donations unless it comes with vested interests... I do not give my donors anything," he had said, adding that as he was only a deputy minister, he had nothing to do with how contracts were awarded.

The fifth senator sworn in was Selangor Wanita Umno chief Datuk Raja Ropiah Raja Abdullah, who takes over the seat vacated by her national chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

Shahrizat stepped down as senator and women, family and community development minister yesterday after being dogged for five months by allegations that she and her family abused RM250 million in public funds.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday he would take up the vacant portfolio, which observers say is a big hint that federal polls are near but Raja Ropiah's swearing in may point to a longer-term solution.

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