

PARLIAMENT-MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, OCT 23 (BERNAMA) -- THE PROTON SAGA COSTS LESS BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT HAS REDUCED VARIOUS TAXES FOR THE NATIONAL CAR INDUSTRY TO ENSURE ITS SUCCESS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD THE DEWAN RAKYAT THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT WAS VITAL BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT AFFORD TO FAIL DURING THIS ECONOMIC RECESSION.

+IF THE (NATIONAL CAR) INDUSTRY FAILS, IT WILL RESULT IN BIG LOSSES FOR THE INVESTORS AND ALSO THE NATION,+ HE SAID IN A REPLY TO A SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION FROM MOHAMED NAJIB WAN MOHAMAD (BN-PASIR PUTEH).

HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO ENSURE THE NATIONAL CAR INDUSTRY'S SUCCESS BECAUSE A LARGE SUM OF CAPITAL WAS INVOLVED AND MANY WORKERS HAD BEEN RECRUITED AND TRAINED FOR THE PURPOSE.

ON ALLEGATIONS THAT THERE WERE REPRESENTATIVES OR SALESMEN OF EDARAN OTOMOBIL NASIONAL (EON) WHO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO SELL OTHER TYPES OF CARS APART FROM PROTON DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID: +I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS HAS HAPPENED BECAUSE THEY RECEIVE COMMISSION FOR SELLING THE PROTON SAGA.+ -- MORE

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+BUT BECAUSE I DO NOT HAVE CLEAR PROOF, I CANNOT ELBORATE,+ HE SAID.

REPLYING TO ENCIK YAHYA HAJI ZAKARIA (BN-BAGAN DATOK), DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT SOME OF THOSE WHO BOUGHT THE PROTON SAGA HAD TO WAIT FOR UP TO THREE MONTHS BECAUSE THE DEMAND WAS ABOVE EXPECTATIONS.

HE THAT THE ORDERS FOR THE PROTON SAGA HAD BEEN PLACED UNTIL MARCH.

EFFORTS WERE BEING MADE TO STEP UP PRODUCTION AND IT WAS HOPED THE BUYERS WOULD BE PATIENT, HE SAID.

ENCIK YAHYA HAD ALSO ASKED ABOUT CLAIMS THAT THERE WERE USED CAR SELLERS WHO SABOTAGED THE PROTON SAGA BY EXHIBITING THE NATIONAL CAR WITH THE USED CARS AND THUS CREATING AN IMPRESSION THAT THE QUALITY OF THE PROTON SAGA WAS POOR. -- MORE

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THE PRIME MINISTER DENIED THIS, SAYING THESE WERE ONLY +CERITA+ (STORIES).

TO A QUESTION FROM ENCIK CHAN KOK KIT (DAP-SUNGAI BESI), HE SAID THAT AMONG THE COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE PROTON SAGA WERE THAT IT TOOK A LONG TIME TO GET AND DID NOT HAVE A RUBBER BUMPER AND A LIMITED COLOUR RANGE.

+BUT WHAT HAPPENS MOST OFTEN IS THAT THE KAMPUNG PEOPLE GO THE EON SHOWROOMS WITH CASH TO BUY THE PROTON SAGA AND WANT TO TAKE IT WITH THEM IMMEDIATELY,+ DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID.

+WE HAVE TRIED TO MEET AS MANY OF THE COMPLAINTS AS POSSIBLE, BUT MANY COMPLAINTS WERE PUT FORWARD AS THOUGH WE HAD MANUFACTURED A ROLLS-ROYCE AND NOT A CAR IN THE 1.3 OR 1.5CC RANGE.+

REPLYING TO ENCIK MAMAT GHAZALEE ABDUL RAHMAN (BN-ULU NERUS) DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE PROTON SAGA WHICH HE TOOK ALONG WITH HIM TO INDONESIA WAS A PRESENT FOR PRESIDENT SUHARTO AND THERE WAS NO INTENTION TO SELL THE CAR THERE. -- MORE

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HE SAID THAT THE 10 PROTON SAGAS SENT TO CHINA RECENTLY WAS AT THE REQUEST OF A FIRM BASED IN THAT COUNTRY TO EXHIBIT THE CARS THERE.

+THERE MAY A POSSIBILITY THAT THE SENDING OF THE CARS THERE WAS JUST A BEGINNING TO EXPORT THE PROTON SAGA TO CHINA,+ HE SAID.

REPLYING TO ENCIK LEE LAM THYE (DAP-KUALA LUMPUR BANDAR), HE SAID THAT APART FROM CHINA AND BRITAIN, SEVERAL OTHER COUNTRIES HAD ALSO SHOWN INTEREST IN THE CAR.

AMONG THEM WERE THAILAND, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, BANGLADESH, OMAN, SWITZERLAND, SWEDEN, WEST GERMANY, SRI LANKA, CYPRUS, CANADA AND IRELAND.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, IN THE MEANTIME, MALAYSIA WAS STILL NOT CAPABLE OF MEETING ANY REQUESTS FROM THESE COUNTRIES. -- MORE

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS MORE INTERESTED IN FULFILLING THE NEEDS OF THE MALAYSIAN MARKET BEFORE CATERING FOR THE OVERSEAS MARKET.

+TO SELL THE PROTON SAGA TO THESE COUNTRIES, WE MUST CREATE SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES LIKE SERVICING STATIONS TO RECTIFY FAULTS AND ENSURE THE QUALITY OF THE CARS,+ HE SAID.

+IF WE FAIL TO PROVIDE SUCH FACILITIES, IT WILL AFFECT THE MARKET OVERSEAS,+ HE SAID.

TO A QUESTION FROM ENCIK LEE ON WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO SEEK THE HELP OF MALAYSIAN MISSIONS OVERSEAS TO PUBLICISE THE PROTON SAGA, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THIS WAS NOT NECESSARY AT PRESENT BECAUSE MALAYSIA WAS NOT YET READY TO PRODUCE A LARGE QUANTITY OF THE CARS.

+WE DO NOT WANT TO FACE A SITUATION WHEN DEMAND EXCEEDS SUPPLY,+ HE ADDED. -- MORE

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TO THE ORIGINAL QUESTION FROM WAN ABU BAKAR WAN MOHAMED (BN-JERANTUT), THE PRIME MINISTER SAID DETAILED STUDIES WERE BEING CARRIED OUT TO DETERMINE THE STRATEGIES TO MARKET THE PROTON SAGA OVERSEAS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT PROTON PLANT WAS CAPABLE OF PRODUCING 80,000 CARS A YEAR AT PRESENT.

IF THE NEED AROSE, WITH MARGINAL INCREASE IN CAPITAL, THE PLANT WAS EASILY CAPABLE OF STEPPING UP PRODUCTION TO 120,000 CARS PER YEAR, HE SAID.

-- BERNAMA
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