

01 MAY 1997

Saleh-Proton

DRB-HICOM READY TO MEET ABU HASSAN OVER PROTON GROUSES

KUALA LUMPUR, May 1 (Bernama) -- DRB-Hicom Group is prepared to meet Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Abu Hassan Omar and State Consumer Affairs Council members to discuss public complaints on Proton cars.

Its executive chairman Datuk Saleh Sulong said the group was confident in resolving all problems raised on the national car if all those attending the discussions were positive in their views.

"I feel this is not a major problem. If the grouses were discussed in a positive manner, the relevant parties will understand the real situation," he told reporters at Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang after seeing off Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who left for a week-long three African nation tour this morning.

Abu Hassan said last week that all problems on the national car would be thrashed out between Proton manufacturers, distributors and consumer council representatives in a meeting on May 9.

Among the common problems were late delivery of new Proton cars, exorbitant prices of second-hand Proton cars and problems in getting spare parts and accessories.

Asked to comment on delays in getting new cars without additional accessories, Saleh said sales outlets required some time as almost all Proton cars were fitted with accessories deemed necessary.

"We fix the accessories early as we expect majority of customers need them but when one or two buyers do not want one or two, we cannot take off from cars which had been fitted as we do not want to spoil the look or leave gaping holes in the car interior," he said.

"Hence, we have to look for other cars, resulting in delays," he said.

Accessories like air conditioners need to be installed in the Proton manufacturing plant itself to suit with the engine power, he said.

If accessories were not suited to the car, consumers would not blame accessories but the cars, he said.

Saleh said Proton and EON salesmen never compelled buyers to take all the accessories and at the same time there was no guarantee that cars minus the accessories could be delivered fast to those with accessories.

"Actually, we give a choice to buyers whether they want accessories or without. There is no element of force," he said.

However, there were salesmen, in their quest to sell as many cars fitted with additional accessories resorted to delay tactics in sending new cars but they had been given a stern warning, he said.

On complaints that accessories fitted by Proton were more expensive than those sold by other companies, Saleh said Proton accessories were guaranteed of its quality and the prices were reasonable.

"The same theory applies to spare parts bought from unauthorised suppliers but they were not genuine parts," he added. -- BERNAMA

AH TS