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Limousines

GOVT OKAYS MERCEDES LIMOS FOR NEW AIRPORT

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 26 (Bernama) -- The government is allowing the whole fleet of 1,050 Mercedes Benz limousines bought by Airport Limo (M) Sdn Bhd (ALM) to be used to serve the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang.

The approval took into account ALM's appeal and that the vehicles were ordered and paid for before the currency crisis hit the country, said Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, who announced the decision here.

The entire consignment of 1,050 units has arrived at Port Klang.

Following its decision the government would issue 700 approved permits (AP) directly to ALM to bring in the cars.

As for the remaining 350 units, NZ Wheels (M) Sdn Bhd would bring them in using its existing APs, Mustapa told reporters at his office.

"As for future needs, the Proton Perdana will be used for the KLIA-Sepang passenger transfer services," he said.

ALM bought the 1,050 Mercedes Benz cars following an earlier government decision in June that 70 per cent of the 1,500 cars designated for KLIA's limousine service would comprise that make of German luxury car.

According to the earlier decision, Proton Perdanas would make up the remaining 30 per cent of the airport's limousine fleet.

However, because of the depreciating ringgit, the government had retracted the decision when tabling the 1998 Budget in October and directed ALM to use a wholly Proton Perdana fleet for its limousine service.

The after-thought left the Mercedes Benzs bought by ALM stranded at Port Klang pending a new government decision following an appeal by the company that it be allowed to use the German-made limousines.

ALM is a consortium comprising Selecta Accord (M) Sdn Bhd, KUPPL (a firm made up of operators and drivers of international airport limousines), Zalnas Limousine Sdn Bhd and Mara Holdings Sdn Bhd.

The consortium was selected last June 24 to run the KLIA limousine service under a government open-tender system.

Mustapa said based on the government's original decision, ALM, through NZ Wheels placed an order for 1,050 units of the Mercedes Benz with Daimler Benz Stuttgart, paying a "Irrevocable Letter of Credit" last July 16.

Most of the consignment are diesel-powered units and specially for use as taxis, he said.

Mustapa said that at a meeting last July 2, ALM shareholders persuaded the consortium to expedite the purchase of the Mercedes Benz limousines as the KLIA was then scheduled to commence operations in January next year.

But the date had since been rescheduled and the new airport would now be operational in the first quarter of next year.

Meanwhile, ALM managing director Badardin Ahmad thanked Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the cabinet for today's decision.

He said in a statement that the company pledged to provide an excellent and efficient limousine service at the new airport.-- BERNAMA

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