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Anwar-Proton

PROTON APPRECIATES EFFORTS OF PREVIOUS MANAGEMENT, SAYS ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today rejected the view that the government and the new management of Proton do not recognise the contributions of those previously involved in the national car project.

He said it is not true that Proton, which celebrated the rolling-out of its one millionth unit last week, is crediting only its new management under Tan Sri Yahya Ahmad for the achievement and not appreciating the efforts of the pioneers of the project.

He said the special tribute paid by Proton to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is appropriate and cannot be questioned because the Prime Minister is the person responsible for coming up with the idea of producing the national car and remains directly involved in its development.

Anwar said that in Dr Mahathir's speech at last week's celebration, he had paid tribute to those who contributed to Proton from the beginning to now.

In addition, Yahaya had invited all Proton directors as well as past and present employees to the celebration and therefore it is not right to say that the company did not appreciate the efforts of others, Anwar told reporters after addressing the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) annual gathering here.

He was commenting on the view expressed by New Straits Times group editor Datuk A. Kadir Jasin in his "Other Thots" column in the New Sunday Times of Jan 5.

Kadir said Proton and Yahya "must recognise the sufferings and sacrifices of the pioneers even while enjoying the rewards and the glory of being the new Proton owners" and that "Yahya cannot truly claim to have made a difference to the national car project unless he is able to compete at home and abroad without the assistance of the government".

Anwar said Kadir's article is not accurate and the people must accept the fact that Yahya's handling of Proton is significant and has brought about a change.

"While we waited for 10 years to produce one million cars, now with the new management we were able to bring out the millionth unit within four years, and we also reduced the import of components and improved export capacity by 40 per cent within one or two years," he said.

The services and contributions of others previously contributed to the new management's success, and the government now has complete faith in the company's capability, he added.

Anwar said the new management had succeeded in improving the efficiency of the company, cut costs and ensured a better deal for smaller firms through the director vendor system.

He also said that Proton's acquisition of Lotus Group International is aimed at achieving synergy and obtaining Lotus' expertise to help upgrade Proton's capability.

According to Anwar, Yahaya is now the prime mover of the national car industry and he ensures that the company is more efficient and faster in meeting the demands of customers.

"He (Yahaya) is also responsible for providing information to the government, especially the Prime Minister, from time to time and receive the ideas of the government and Dr Mahathir," he said.

Anwar stressed that it was proper for him to comment on the newspaper

article as it had tried to give the impression that the efforts of those previously involved with Proton were not recognised and appreciated.

"I feel that I need to explain to the government, the opposition, and local and foreign observers that the Proton project could not have attained its present success without not just the ideas but the direct involvement of the Prime Minister, so we have to accept this fact," he added. --

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