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RTD ticked off over MyKad incident

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PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - An irate Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today told off the the Road Transport Department for refusing to accept the MyKad as proof of a valid driving licence.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the department's stand that motorists had to produce their driving licence on request by RTD staff would lead to confusion.

"I am puzzled as to why the RTD issued such a statement. The MyKad is a government document which should be accepted," he said on the case involving a finance manager who was slapped with a summons by the Negri Sembilan RTD for failing to produce his driving licence despite having a MyKad.

Chung King Keong was stopped during a traffic operation at Km4 of Teluk Kemang in Port Dickson three days ago where RTD officers demanded his driving licence.

He had explained that his driving licence in the MyKad could be detected using a card reader but to no avail.

The State RTD enforcement spokesman was quoted as saying that motorists should produce their driving licences during traffic operations even if they had their MyKad.

Speaking after chairing the National Finance Council at the Finance Ministry, Abdullah, who is Home Minister, said such a problem should not have surfaced.

"If one agency is questioning the move now, then it is difficult to accept ...I consider it is done in bad faith.

"If they are not happy with certain things, they should approach the National Registration Department for clarification.

"We have stated that MyKad should be accepted and now one agency is saying the opposite. It creates unnecessary confusion among the public at a time when the Government is working hard to get all Malaysians to use the card."

Malaysia is the first country to introduce the MyKad, a multi-purpose smart card based on chip technology and biometrics with high security features.

It contains information of the holder, including birth certificate details and information for dealing with government agencies.

Additional applications such as ATM, MEPS cash and Touch `n Go will also be incorporated. Some 1.3 million MyKad have been issued so far.

Meanwhile, Abdullah said foreign investors and tourists should not be influenced by a United States' travel advisory which has warned of possible terror strikes in Malaysia.

He said foreigners, especially Malaysia's neighbours, were aware of the true situation in the country and the Government's determination in maintaining peace and security.

"We are concerned that travel advisories issued by some countries for their citizens might influence other nationals against visiting Malaysia. But at the same time, we are confident people know that Malaysia is safe and peaceful," he said.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said the Treasury had been directed to monitor any possible effect of the advisories on investment and tourist arrivals.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had rapped the US, saying

it was tantamount to economic sabotage.

"Even though the country is safe, the Government cannot just ignore the advisories. We will continue to monitor their effect particularly on tourist arrival," Abdullah said.

He acknowledged that Americans did not constitute the bulk of tourists to Malaysia but said others might believe the warning.

Asked whether the Government should issue a statement advising non-Americans to ignore the warning, Abdullah said reservations expressed by Malaysian leaders including from Dr Mahathir, were sufficient.

"We have said earlier that the advisory was unacceptable. The Prime Minister has spoken about it and from the various statements, it is enough to assure other nationals that the warning is baseless and unwarranted."