

Rafidah sends letter on APs to Mahathir

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IPOH: International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz has prepared a letter for Proton adviser Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the issue of approved permits (APs) for imported cars and considers the case closed.

"I do not want to comment on the contents of the letter. It is enough that I have explained the whole situation to the Cabinet and Tun. Having done so, I consider the case closed," she told reporters after meeting Perak Wanita Umno members here yesterday.

"I showed the letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak first and they have endorsed my letter. I have told my private secretary to deliver the letter to Tun," Rafidah, who is also Wanita Umno chief added.

On Monday, Dr Mahathir had claimed that 54,000 of the 67,000 APs issued last year were given to 20 companies, while the remainder went to 82 companies.

He also raised other issues such as low prices and the under-declaration of some imported cars, and the failure of a minister to investigate the situation despite directives being issued when he was prime minister.

In **Kuala Lumpur**, Abdullah said the Cabinet had directed Rafidah to explain the matter and also to write to Dr Mahathir.

"Rafidah was asked a lot of questions. She will give further information to the Cabinet," Abdullah told a press conference after opening the International Conference on Knowledge Management at the Putra

World Trade Centre.

Asked if her the Government would reveal the names of AP holders, Abdullah said the policy for the time being was not to reveal the recipients.

Abdullah added that the Government still regarded Proton as the national car and wanted it to succeed.

"We have to work hard to be

competitive and ensure quality remains high," he said, adding that protection for Proton must be gradually reduced for it to become more competitive.

On the war of words between Proton and the Government in the media, Abdullah said: "Proton has its views and Khazanah also has its. They will sort it out."

In a related development,

Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Mah Siew Keong clarified that the ministry gave out 51,713 APs last year and not 67,000 as claimed by Dr Mahathir.

In a press statement yesterday, Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said Rafidah should make public her reply to all the issues raised by Dr Mahathir.