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Abdullah-Auto

NATIONAL AUTOMOTIVE POLICY TO CONSIDER NATIONAL CARMAKERS' VIEWS

JOHOR BAHRU, July 10 (Bernama) -- The views of all players, including the national carmakers, will be taken into consideration in drawing up the national automotive policy, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said a Cabinet paper on the industry was distributed last week to ministers who would need two weeks to study it.

"The policy will take into account matters connected with the national car industry. That is unavoidable.

"We have to decide on how much protection to provide the national car industry, how far we want it to develop and progress, and what level of capability we want to achieve," he told reporters after closing the Johor Umno convention.

Abdullah said the matters concerning the national car industry had not only been voiced by Proton adviser and former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad but also those involved in the marketing and assembling of vehicles.

"We will study all the views," he said.

On the issue of Approved Permit (AP) for imported cars raised by Dr Mahathir, the Prime Minister clarified media reports today quoting him as saying that he considered the issue as resolved.

Abdullah said he was referring to the action of International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz sending a letter explaining the issue to Dr Mahathir.

"What I meant was that Rafidah had carried out her duty as the minister concerned to explain what Tun (Dr Mahathir) had raised. Rafidah gave her explanation so that there would be no confusion and doubts regarding the issue.

"The letter was written and sent, and that was what I meant by saying it was resolved. But concerning the national automotive policy, that is a separate matter," he said.

Dr Mahathir had questioned the large number of APs granted to some companies and the import of foreign cars for sale at very low prices which reduced the competitiveness of Proton cars.

Earlier in his speech at the Umno convention, Abdullah said a huge gap currently existed between the government's aspiration to help Malays and the success achieved.

He said this gap was caused by a small number of people who betrayed the trust of the government, especially in the granting of contracts and permits and distribution of shares meant to improve the lot of the Malays.

"We give licences and permits to them to increase the participation of bumiputeras in certain sectors and similarly with shares but they do not do their work and instead sold or rent their licences and permits to others," he said.

Also present at the convention were Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, who is the Johor Umno chief, and Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is the party vice president.

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