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AP-DISCLOSURE

PM'S OFFICE REVEALS NAMES OF AP RECIPIENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 18 (Bernama) -- Four people, Tan Sri Nasimuddin SM Amin, Datuk Syed Azman Syed Ibrahim, Datuk Mohd Haniff Abdul Aziz and Datuk Azzuddin Ahmad between them have been given more than 25,000 Approved Permits (APs) to import luxury cars into the country in last three years, according to a list revealed by the government today.

Of the number, Syed Azman, Mohd Haniff and Azzudin received a total of 16,214 APs under several companies while Nasimuddin, chairman of the Naza Motor Group, held 9,412 APs mainly under Naza Kia Sdn Bhd.

The list of a total of 67,158 APs, issued as early as 1970 till this year was released by the Prime Minister's office this evening amidst the controversy surrounding the issuance of APs.

It was the first time ever that the names of AP recipients were made public despite statements by government leaders earlier that the policy of not revealing their names would remain.

The AP issue made newspaper headlines when former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the issuance of large numbers of these permits had led to unfair competition against the national car, Proton.

Many importers, said Dr Mahathir, were under-declaring prices and selling these cars at a price that was lower than the real price.

He had questioned how 20 companies were given the bulk of more than 50,000 APs when the government's objective was to assist as many Bumiputera businessmen as possible by spreading out the issuance of such permits.

A statement said the government had decided to make public the list of names of the AP recipients.

It said there are two types of APs, the open AP and the franchise AP.

Under the open AP, the permit holders are allowed to import new and used cars from any sources but the issuance of such APs was terminated in 1988.

Franchise APs are issued to companies which have exclusive agency agreements direct with foreign car manufacturers.

The AP, issued by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), was introduced in 1970 with the objective of promoting and providing opportunities for Bumiputera entrepreneurs in the automotive sector.

The first time that Nasimuddin's name appeared on the list was in 1988 when he was given 3,112 APs under the name of Naza Konsortium Sdn Bhd.

The biggest he received was 8,432 in 1997 followed by two more blocks in the same year of 76 and 417 respectively.

But in 2002, the names of Syed Azman and Mohd Haniff, both former MITI officers, emerged on the AP scene and since then, according to the list, they have been the biggest recipients.

In that year, the duo with Azzuddin first received 7,603 APs under Weststar Motorsport Sdn Bhd to import Honda cars.

Under two companies, Atlantic Star Auto Sdn Bhd and Auto Pacific Star Sdn Bhd, both men got another 5,669 APs in the same year to import Ford and Chevrolet cars.

So far this year, Syed Azman and Mohd Haniff were given 1,280 permits to import Suzuki cars under Global World Trade Sdn Bhd and another 896 to import Audi cars under Territorial Star Sdn Bhd.

Nasimuddin imported Kia, Mercedes Benz, Peugeot, Ferrari, Modena, Maserati, Rolls Royce, Bentley and Brabus cars.

Among other major recipients was 8,573 APs for Hyundai cars issued in 1997 to Hyumal Motor Sdn Bhd, owned by Berjaya Group Bhd, Sime Darby Bhd and Tan Sri Vincent Tan.

Meanwhile, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, who came under fire from Dr Mahathir for the massive issuance of APs, said today she hoped the letter of explanation she had sent to the former prime minister would resolve all the issues he raised.

"For me... (the matter) has been settled, as the explanation given is clear, concise and complete. I hope with the explanation, the matter would not arise again," she said.

The letter was written on the Cabinet's request that a full explanation detailing the real situation be provided to Dr Mahathir, who is also the adviser to Proton.

Rafidah who declined to give details of the letter, said: "I do not want people to think that what was said by Tun (Mahathir) was correct...I look really bad. Not good...I had to explain."

"As a mark of respect for Tun Mahathir, there is no need to print the contents of the letter, she told reporters.

Rafidah said she had so far also not received any feedback from the former prime minister and neither was she expecting to receive any.

-- BERNAMA

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