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RAFIDAH-PROTON

RAFIDAH DECLINES COMMENT ON PROTON

KUALA LUMPUR, July 6 (Bernama) -- The Minister of International Trade and Industry, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, today declined comment on the Proton issue when reporters met her at her ministry here.

"I have nothing to say, I've told you," said Rafidah as she smiled her way from the ministry's main entrance towards her multi-purpose vehicle parked at the car porch.

Reporters, photographers and cameramen from the local media had waited for the minister since noon to get her to comment on Proton, especially on the statement made by its adviser, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Despite being given the runaround and told to leave by security guards, the reporters refused to budge until they had caught sight of the minister leaving her office.

At about 5.50pm, Rafidah emerged and then broke into a smile but walked hurriedly to her car and closed the door with a guard shielding her from photographers and tv cameramen.

Rafidah was being sought after as reporters had wanted her to comment, among others, on the Approved Permits (APs) issue as her ministry (MITI) was responsible for their issuance.

Dr Mahathir had claimed that out of the 67,000 APs issued last year, only 12,600 were given to 82 companies while the bulk of 54,000 APs were given to 20 companies instead.

The former prime minister also commented on the alleged under-declaration on the cost of South Korean cars into Malaysia and voiced his surprise of how these cars could be imported at below their cost of production.

Dr Mahathir had come to the defence of Proton after the first national car maker was criticised for being uncompetitive against imports and those produced by other companies given the national car manufacturer status.

He also said the criticisms on Proton undermined its credibility as well as its sales potential when Malaysians lose confidence in cars produced by that company. -- BERNAMA

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