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RAFIDAH-APs

RAFIDAH: MITI WON'T PUBLICISE NAMES OF AP RECIPIENTS

SHAH ALAM, May 31 (Bernama) -- The Ministry of International Trade and Industry will not publicise the names of those who receive Approved Permits (APs) for vehicle imports from the ministry.

Its minister, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, said the ministry was very transparent as far as APs were concerned as their issuance was announced many times in Parliament.

APs are given by the ministry for the import of cars into the country.

"It is not appropriate to make them (names of recipients) public knowledge," she said in response to questions after officiating Kanzen Stainless Processors service centre here.

Rafidah was commenting on statements made by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the government should divulge the names of those who had been given APs to import cars as a means of removing any suspicion of improper conduct or accusations of unfairness.

Dr Mahathir had been commenting on reports that the government was continuing to issue large numbers of APs for completely-built-up units (CBUs).

The local automobile industry would suffer if the entry of foreign cars was not controlled, said Dr Mahathir, who is also adviser to national car manufacturer Proton.

Rafidah said: "It is not our policy to disclose who got the APs. In fact, we have never done this before, even before I became minister."

Some news reports last year had claimed that the issuance of APs had concentrated on a few individuals.

Rafidah said that as of todate, there were 116 AP holders and 31 of them were franchise type holders bringing in 41 brands of vehicles such as Mercedes, Kia, Hyundai, Chevrolet, BMW, Audi and Bentley.

As for the remaining AP holders, part of them have been directed to form consortiums as they are now in a limbo.

"When I took over the AP in 1987, I made a thorough study and took back 167 of APs given as there had been a misuse of the facility," Rafidah said.

Last year, the total of APs approved were 66,277 units but they had brought in only 51,713 units.

The ministry has placed a ceiling on the number of APs that could be approved each year, where it cannot exceed more than 10 percent of the local production, Rafidah said.

"Because we are committed to the process of market opening and liberalisation, we added another 10 percent. But so far, that limit has yet to be exceeded. Although approved, the AP holders have not brought in the full amount (of units)," she said.

Rafidah also said that she was confident of the committee responsible for the approval of AP applications, chaired by her ministry's Secretary General, Datuk Mohd Sidek Hassan.

"I am confident that my officers discharge their duties with integrity," she said.

She also stressed that all selections are based on merit.

"There are those, among applicants who have been rejected, who think that we give the AP to cronies. Their applications have been rejected because they did not qualify based on reasons such as not having an agreement with the principal and others," she reiterated. -- BERNAMA

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