

They got it wrong on FTA, says Rafidah

The Star - 21/3/2007

Critics don't have full understanding

KUALA LUMPUR: Some negative comments on the Malaysia-US Free Trade Agreement negotiations have been made due to the lack of understanding of the FTA and its related issues, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said.

Clearing the air on the FTA negotiations during RTM 1's *60 Minutes with a Minister* programme here yesterday, Rafidah said criticisms by several parties with their own agenda had further added to the confusion on the issue.

She said that while some parties were claiming that local farmers would be affected by the FTA, in reality it was not the case.

For example, some people had expressed concerns that there would be an influx of rice from the United States after the FTA.

"In reality, our rice production is not enough and we import 30% of our rice and this comes mainly from Vietnam which accounts for 420,000 tonnes or RM415mil worth of our rice import. This compares with only an import of 385 tonnes from the US worth RM1.36mil.

"Our rice is in fact competing with the rice from Vietnam as the grade is the same, and not with that from the US, which is of a different grade and caters mainly to the Japanese and

»We want the people to have the trust that this government is responsible«

DATUK SERI RAFIDAH AZIZ



Koreans in the country," the minister said.

Rafidah also reiterated the Government's stance that the FTA negotiations would not jeopardise the country's interest.

"We want the people to have the trust that this government is responsible."

She also said the officers appointed as negotiators would ensure that the interest of the people and the country were given the main consideration during negotiations. — Bernama