

Rafidah must explain

Cabinet seeks answers on AP issue

■ By Zubaidah
Abu Bakar

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz has some explaining to do.

The Cabinet has asked the International Trade and Industry Minister to explain why 54,400 approved permits (APs) were issued to only 20 companies.

She was also directed to write a letter to former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to reply to issues he raised on the Government's automotive policy.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

Rafidah to send letter to Dr M

IPOH, Thurs. — International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz today said a letter to former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, addressing several issues raised by the Proton adviser in relation to the country's automotive policy, was ready.

She said her special officer would be

sending the letter to Dr Mahathir at an appropriate time.

"The letter is not an explanation but it contains all the facts that had been (also) passed on to the Cabinet last night," Rafidah said after "An Evening With Umno Wanita Chief" organised by Wanita Umno Perak today. — Bernama

said today that Rafidah gave the Cabinet a briefing on the automotive policy at its weekly meeting

Asked whether she had

been asked to explain why 54,400 APs were issued to only 20 companies, he said: "She was asked a lot of things.

"She will prepare and provide information for the Cabinet."

During a Press conference on Tuesday, Dr Mahathir said

that out of the 67,000 APs issued last year, only 12,600 were given to 82 companies while 54,000 APs were given to 20 companies.

He also questioned the policy of allowing the import of foreign cars at very low prices, a move which he said had hurt the performance of Proton here.

Rafidah was asked to reply to Dr Mahathir because the issues concerned her ministry, said Abdullah.

He also said the decision not to reveal names of AP holders still stands.

■ SEE ALSO P23

Mah: Dr Mahathir's AP figure does not tally

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — A total of 51,713 and not 67,000 approved permits (APs) were issued last year, Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Mah Siew Keong said today. He said the figure stated on Tuesday by Proton Holdings Bhd adviser Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad did not tally with ministry statistics.

"The figure mentioned by Tun (Dr Mahathir) exceeds our official figure by more than 15,000. That

is a big difference," he told a Press conference after launching the 16th Malaysia International Machinery Fair (MIMF) here.

Mah, however, refused to comment further on the issue, saying that he only wanted to clarify the actual number of APs issued last year.

"I just want to comment on some facts about the issue. I want to give you the actual figure."

The former prime minister had stated that the large number of

APs issued last year and the low landed price of completely-built-up (CBU) cars had undermined the sales of Proton cars.

The AP system was introduced in 1970 to encourage Bumiputera entrepreneurs to be actively involved in the automotive sector.

In 1987, the issuing of APs to 153 companies was stopped because the companies in question were not in operation, had no showroom facilities or after-sales services and were also selling the permits.

Mah said one of the reasons for the increase in APs was the Ministry's policy of issuing the permit to companies that had the franchise to import specific models of new cars.

The policy was introduced in 1997, and in 1998 the ministry stopped issuing open APs.

Despite the increase in APs issued, he stressed the fact that CBU vehicles accounted for less than 10 per cent of Malaysia's total car sales last year.