

Constitution does not guarantee AP privileges for Bumis, says Pakatan
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 18 — Putrajaya must do away with the current approved permit (AP) system for imported cars as it only benefited a small, select group of politically-connected Bumiputeras, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers said today.

They pointed out that no area of the Federal Constitution expressly grants to Bumiputeras AP licensing rights, and that such claims were a “complete stretch of the imagination.”

Bumiputera car dealers association Pekema as well as Malay rights lobby Perkasa have demanded that the government maintain Malaysia’s controversial permit system for imported cars, saying that the current system benefited Bumiputera businesses.

Both groups maintain that the privileges under the AP system was a guaranteed Bumiputera constitutional right, and came under the purview of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong,

“Pekema is talking [nonsense]. Find me the clause in the Constitution that says cars must have APs. And (that) whatever APs must be for Bumis. It takes a complete stretch of the imagination to interpret any clause on the special position of Malays to mean constitutionally guaranteed AP privileges,” DAP national publicity secretary Tony Pua told The Malaysian Insider.

Pua said that associations such as Pekema were only speaking for themselves in wanting to maintain the “rent-seeking” practices of the AP system.

The Petaling Jaya Utara MP added that the AP system served no other purpose than to make its beneficiaries “instant millionaires.”

Pua said Article 153 was being twisted to extend to APs. According to Pua, the onus was on the government to ensure that APs were put on open tender so that only genuine and qualified business operators would secure the licences to import cars, instead of “middlemen seeking instant profits.”

“The taxpayers loses more than a billion ringgit a year as a result of the giving away of APs to selected cronies instead of being sold via auction to all businesses or interested parties.”

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar advised Pekema to demand from the government a disclosure of the recipients of APs since the programme’s inception before extolling its success.

“Without such data, how would we ascertain its usefulness for the majority of Bumiputeras?

“As it is, the majority of the recipients are ‘Umnoputras’ — and they are gaining profit at the expense of the country’s wealth,” she told The Malaysian Insider.

The Lembah Pantai MP said PR’s position was for a gradual “phasing out” of the AP system, and to assist poor Malays and Bumiputeras through a targeted subsidy programme as well

as overall improvement on "education/employment and social [progress] opportunities."

Pekema and Perkasa have demanded that the government prioritise Bumiputera interests before conforming to set international trade agreements such as the Asean Free Trade Area (Afta).

Pekema president Datuk Zainuddin Abd Rahman said on Monday that the association is seeking royal intervention to block the Najib administration's plans to phase out the AP system for imported cars by 2015.

"The only ones who can cancel the AP are the Agong and the Malay Rulers, so it cannot be cancelled," said Zainuddin.

"The AP is included as part of permits, permits under Article 153 of the Constitution, which guarantees Malay and Bumiputera rights along with reserve land, scholarships, government posts."

He said that the AP system was the "most successful" system for Bumiputeras, touting it as one of the main accomplishments of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

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