

## **Over 80,000 vehicles registered in 14 months**

Posted By Alva Solomon On March 22, 2010 (SN)

Over 32,000 cars were registered by the Licence Revenue Office (LRO) over the last 14 months and legitimate vehicle importers are calling on the authorities to rein in private vehicle importers who bring in cars for resale.

According to the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) as of March 2009, a total of 81,473 vehicles were registered with the agency, 40% of this number being cars. According to the statistics within the same period, 17,181 motorcycles were registered along with 5,935 minibuses and 6,353 lorries.

On August 10 last year, the 'MM' series of vehicles was introduced to the road network as the 'LL' series expired after reaching the 10,000 mark. The GRA stated recently that there are some 1,638 vehicles not on its database to which licences were sold in 2009. The popular auto dealers declined to give statistics on vehicles sold by them over the past year for marketing reasons. However, according to the dealers there are specific types of vehicles which are in demand.

The vehicles in demand include the 1997/98 Toyota Raum and according to the vehicle importers, the demand for the car rose over the past several months. An official at Fazeela Auto Sales on the West Coast Demerara told this newspaper that demands for the vehicle may have to do with its style; the space and comfort it possesses as well as its price, which according to him, is in the vicinity of \$2 million. While Fazeela Auto is new to the business when compared with the more established dealers, the official stated that the company sold several dozen vehicles over the past year. He estimated that the more established companies would sell an average of 300 vehicles over a six- month period.

Other dealers listed the Raum as the vehicle in demand. However other makes of Toyotas are also popular. These include the Toyota Allion. According to an official of Caricom Auto Sales at Lusignan on the East Coast Demerara, many customers have been requesting that specific model. She said that the request may be related to the "style and space" the vehicle offers.

The majority of the vehicles on the roads of Guyana have been imported from Japan and most of them are reconditioned cars. However, according to one auto dealer who spoke to Stabroek News recently, there has been a change in the "trend" of traditional sources. The dealer stated that Japan had been the market of choice over the years for importers. However, vehicles are now being sourced from Singapore, neighbouring Suriname and the UK. As such models of brands such as Fiat, Daihatsu, BMW, Saab as well as Mercedes Benz have become the vehicles of choice of many. He noted that these brands are usually requested by "more well off" customers, since they are usually expensive.

Another dealer stated that over the years, persons bought vehicles according to the availability of spares. However this has changed and according to him, vehicles are now being sold with warranties, which include the provision of spare parts. The dealer noted that parts for the newer

models of vehicles, such as the Honda Jazz, may be difficult to source as parts are usually made available when the model becomes defunct.

Meanwhile, several auto dealers are peeved at the “rising number” of private individuals who import vehicles and “escape necessary taxes”, with one dealer proposing the formation of an association to address their concerns.

According to the auto dealers, the established auto entities, “are made to pay an extra tax while the private importers escape the tax”. Referring to the situation as an unfair practice, another auto dealer stated that the established auto dealers offer after-sales services to the benefit of the customer. He said the private importers often do not offer such services and as such the customer “ends up losing”. He noted that there have been many cases of persons approaching his car dealership to remedy problems associated with cars imported via private importers.