

06/08/2005

MAHATHIR-AP

MOVE TO HAVE NEW AP POLICY GOOD, SAYS MAHATHIR

By Tengku Noor Shamsiah

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 6 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government's plan to announce a new policy for the automotive industry and Approval Permit (AP) was a good move.

Responding to questions from reporters here today on last month's release of the AP list, Dr Mahathir said: "I think we should not bother about that anymore. The most important thing now is the policy on AP and the automotive industry policy."

The former prime minister and Proton adviser today received the MSA Golden Jubilee Science and Technology Award 2005 from the Malaysian Scientific Association in conjunction with its International Science Congress (ISC) 2005.

The award, a recognition of Dr Mahathir's contribution to the country's development of science and technology, was presented by Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation Datuk Seri Jamaludin Mohd Jarjis.

Asked at a press conference later if he was going to press for the release of the 2003 AP list, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the government to decide.

"I am no longer in the government. I told myself I should not bother the government."

He said he had sought the 2004 list because he was the adviser of Proton.

Dr Mahathir said he saw Proton facing difficulties not only with regards to the number of APs but also the declared price of vehicles which were ridiculously low.

"Even the cost of materials was almost one and half of the declared price," he said.

Asked on whether there was a need for political will by the government to ensure Proton's survival, Dr Mahathir said: "I am quite sure that the government wants it to survive and I don't think that the government wants to kill the Proton industry."

Dr Mahathir said the government had ventured into the car business at the right time with only "500 million dollars".

"Today, if you want to go into this industry, you require something like three billion ringgit and even then you will not be able to make much of a progress," he said.

Asked on the pressure facing Minister of International Trade and Industry, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz to explain the AP list, Dr Mahathir responded: "That is not my business. I am only interested in Proton. It is no longer my Cabinet." -- BERNAMA

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