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Azlan Hashim tipped to be Proton chairman

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Former Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange executive chairman Datuk Azlan Hashim is likely to be appointed chairman of national car company, Proton Holdings.

This follows the resignation of Datuk Abu Hassan Kendut earlier this week.

Sources told the New Straits Times that Azlan, a director of Khazanah Nasional, was seen as the best qualified candidate to replace Abu Hassan, a respected corporate figure. Khazanah currently holds the majority stake in Proton.

It is learnt that Abu Hassan resigned following a decision by Khazanah Nasional to consider an appeal by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to extend the contract of Tengku Mahaleel Ariff as Proton's chief executive.

Proton's board of directors had earlier decided not to renew Tengku Mahaleel's term and wanted a new CEO appointed. However, Dr Mahathir, the architect of the national car policy and now adviser to the auto maker, appealed the decision, asking that Tengku Mahaleel be allowed to continue in his position as he was vital to the company's expansion plans.

Khazanah Nasional considered his appeal and granted Tengku Mahaleel a two-year extension. He has had a uneasy relationship with both Abu Hassan and the previous board headed by Tan Sri Hassan Merican.

Sources said Tengku Mahaleel has been directed not to bypass the board in decision-making.

Proton is fighting tough competition; its market share fell to 44 per cent last year from 48 per cent in 2003, while foreign brands were raising their share to 21 per cent from 15.

Azlan began his career as an auditor at Peat Marwick, Mitchell & Co, Melbourne and Kuala Lumpur.

He went on to hold positions in merchant banks, and investment holding and financial services companies in Kuala Lumpur.

He was appointed executive chairman of KLSE and its group in January 1998.

(END) Source : New Straits Times