

**Proton not for sale, says Dr M**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**Oct 30, 2009**  
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Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has reiterated that Proton Holdings Bhd, the national car company that was his brainchild in the mid 1980s, is not for sale.

Mahathir, (*left*) who is also Proton adviser, said lately, he has been disturbed by media reports that Proton is to be sold to certain parties.

He acknowledged that this talk has agitated Proton staff, who truly felt that the company was returning to profitability.

"I have told the chairperson and the chief executive officer that Proton is not for sale. I think I should also assure the senior staff and the workers that there is no plan to sell Proton in the foreseeable future," said the former statesman in his blog posting.

He said Proton workers are indeed spooked over talks of a new investor taking it over, as they are worried of being laid off.

Mahathir said the workers' concern over the matter would affect their performance, and it came at a bad time when they were trying to contribute to Proton's recovery.

"I noticed that the new Proton Saga is often seen on the streets of Kuala Lumpur. I know that a new car would not be noticed on the road until a certain volume of sales is achieved. Other Proton models are also frequently seen - a sign of good sales."

Dr Mahathir said there is, however, a need to restructure the company and reach an agreement with the potential partner to ensure Proton fully recovers.

**Nadzmi: Proton not lame duck**

The former premier's statement is also shared by Proton chairperson Mohd Nadzmi Mohd Salleh, who had earlier this month stated the company was not a lame duck that needs a helping hand to survive.

Mohd Nadzmi reiterated that any future collaboration with other parties must be based on the Proton's strengths.

"We are not like a lame duck wanting somebody to carry us and I believe that we must use our strength to collaborate with other parties.

"The impression that Proton is dying, and needs a partner, is not the case," he had said, adding Proton's financial performance was improving.

Proton reported a pre-tax profit of RM64.4 million in the first quarter ending June 30, 2009, up 9.7 percent from RM58.7 million chalked up in the same quarter last year.

The articulate Mahathir said in his posting that previous years had mostly seen cars from the Perodua stables on the road, and not Proton.

This turnaround shows that Proton is making good sales.

## **Proton affairs referred to Mahathir**

The former premier said since Mohd Nadzmi became the new chairperson, he had found it easier to perform his work as an adviser.

"The prime minister has also indicated that Proton affairs should be referred to me. Accordingly I have been busy on a plan to resuscitate the company. I have been talking to potential technology partners for Proton.

He said that he agrees with the headlines of certain tabloids to leave Proton alone.

"If Proton staff is assured of this I feel sure we would be able to put Proton firmly on its feet," said Mahathir.

While Proton car sales may have recovered, it was reported that the national car company's sales have surpassed targets in the United Kingdom, despite the global economic slowdown.

Proton Cars (UK) Ltd managing director Brian Collier said the company's target had been to sell about 1,000 units this year but it is actually 10 per cent ahead of its target.

He said car sales in the UK market were expected to drop to 1.7 million this year from 2.4 million two years ago.

Of the four models sold in the UK, Savvy is the best selling model which makes up about 40 per cent of total sales. The other models are Gen2, Persona, and Satria. Since entering the UK market in 1989, Proton has sold 150,000 cars there.

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