

Dr M: Cars belong to Proton

• **By Shamini Darshni**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Confirming that he had returned seven cars given to him by Proton Bhd, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said they were meant for him to test-drive.

"They are not my cars, they belong to Proton. So I had to give them back because I have finished using them," the former Prime Minister said.

He denied a newspaper report that "the strained relationship" between him and Proton had prompted him to return the cars.

The report, quoting sources, said Dr Mahathir was "deeply hurt" by recent developments in the national car-making company.

Mahathir dismissed a suggestion that his actions may be seen as a rebuff towards Proton cars.

"Well, they can see it in what way they like. The cars do not belong to me and I

returned them to the owner, that's all."

Asked whether he was unhappy with the goings-on in Proton, he said: "I don't know. I don't know what is going on in Proton. I have no communication."

When reminded that he was the adviser, he said: "Yes, but I can only advise if I know something is happening."

Dr Mahathir explained that each new car produced by Proton was sent to him for testing and now that he had finished testing, he returned them. Asked how he found the cars after testing, he said some were good but he did not know about the others.

The only Proton car he still has is the Proton Saga which he bought "a long time ago". Dr Mahathir said he would remain as Proton's adviser.

Earlier, he delivered a keynote address titled "The Thinking of a Thinker" at a two-day seminar organised by the International Islamic University Malaysia.

Fielding questions from

the floor, Dr Mahathir said he hoped he had made the right decisions during his tenure as Prime Minister when appointing ministers.

"I hope I made the right choices. Maybe I made a wrong choice," he said when asked why some ministers he appointed were still holding on to their positions when he had already retired.

"My decisions as a leader may not be perfect and somewhere along the line my imperfections may have shown," he said.

He said that at a particular moment, the mistake might not show itself because "an officer is not corrupt because (he or she) cannot make decisions but when they become a minister, then it shows".

When asked how politicians think and how they managed to stay in power for a long time, he said: "Mostly, they think about being elected and re-elected", which drew laughter from the audience.