

Mahathir: The cars do not belong to me

BY IZATUN SHARI

KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, whose relationship with the Proton management is said to be strained, has confirmed returning seven Proton vehicles to the company, saying the cars do not belong to him.

"I can't use so many cars; they are just sent in for testing. I think they are not properly documented. They are not my cars. They belong to Proton. So I have to give them back because I have finished trying them." he said, adding that Proton sends every new car it produced to him to test.

He was responding to a report in *The Star* yesterday that the Proton vehicles, which were meant for Dr Mahathir's personal use and also for his staff, were returned to Proton headquarters in Shah Alam although the management had persuaded him to continue using the vehicles.

They included the VW Touareg, a four-wheel drive, and the WV Phaeton and Proton Waja cars.

It is understood that Dr Mahathir is unhappy over the controversial departure of chief executive officer Tengku



RETURNED TO OWNER: The VW Touareg that Dr Mahathir returned recently parked at the Proton factory in Shah Alam yesterday.

Tan Sri Mahaleel Tengku Ariff as well as the issue over the import of foreign cars through Approved Permits.

On what he thought of the vehicles after testing them, the

Proton adviser said some of the cars were good.

Asked whether he returned the vehicles because he was unhappy with developments in Proton, he said: "I don't

know what's going on in Proton. I have no communication with them."

Pressed on the matter since he is Proton's adviser, the former prime minister said: "I can

only advise if I know something is happening."

On whether he will remain as a Proton adviser, he said: "I am still Proton adviser as far as I know."

Asked whether his move to return the vehicles was seen as a rebuff to the Proton management, Dr Mahathir said: "They can see this in whatever way they like but, the thing is, they don't belong to me and I returned them to the owner. That's all."

Dr Mahathir said he was still keeping a Proton Saga which he owned a long time ago.

The former prime minister earlier delivered a talk at a seminar on *The Thinking of a Thinker* organised by International Islamic University Malaysia here yesterday.

During a dialogue session, he was asked why certain parties, leaders and even the media had shown ingratitude towards him as a former prime minister particularly on the Proton and AP issues.

Dr Mahathir said: "As a retired politician, I have to accept I have no power. I let them (current leaders) make decisions. I have pledged not to be obstructive when I retire. I accept that things are done differently."