



LEADERSHIP STUDIES: Dr Mahathir congratulating the Perdana Leadership Foundation grant recipient Dr Suhaimi Shahnon (right) as the Foundation's Board of Trustees chairman Tan Sri Azman Hashim (left) looks on.

Dr M: Proton might as well close shop

BY MERGAWATI ZULFAKAR

PUTRAJAYA: Stung by criticisms over Proton's competitiveness, its adviser Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the national car industry might as well close shop.

He was responding to readers' comments in a newspaper that it was best to close down Proton, which received subsidies, to ease the burden on the people.

Backbenchers Club chairman Datuk Shahrir Samad was also recently quoted in the press as saying that Proton should not be required to meet the ruling on local content of up to 90% if it affected its competitiveness and increased prices.

Shahrir had stated that Proton was responsible for the development of local vendors and if their products were still

not up to standard and could not be exported, they should close down.

Said Dr Mahathir: "I think the Proton management should consider such a proposal. And if they think that one way of overcoming the many problems that we have today, including APs, is that we should not have a national car industry, (then) we close shop."

He was speaking to newsmen after presenting Perdana Leadership Foundation grants to five local researchers.

"It is my brainchild, but it does not mean the Government must uphold it."

On whether he would continue as adviser, Dr Mahathir said he had been appointed to the post and would stay on.

On the recent TV3 interview where he revealed a letter to show that he did not

approve giving the Naza Kia Carnival model national car status, Dr Mahathir said: "If you keep on saying I did this thing which is wrong, I feel I have a right to correct (the misperception).

"It was mentioned that I had approved national status for the Naza car. And there were other statements that reflected badly on me."

He also said that when he brought up the AP issue, he was concerned about how it was affecting Proton.

"What I think does not matter. What people think, matters.

"If the people are satisfied that APs should be given to one or two people who become millionaires overnight, fly around in helicopters and all that, then it's okay. I have no objections."