



Dr Mahathir appointed adviser to Proton

FORMER Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (pic) said yesterday he had been appointed adviser to Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional (Proton) the country's top carmaker, and would tell it to raise its game and find a suitable foreign partner.

Dr Mahathir, who handed power to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi last October, said in an interview in Kuala Lumpur that he had been asked to help out at the company.

He said state investment arm Khaz-

anah Nasional Bhd. the major shareholder of Proton, had been told of the appointment.

"Nobody has made that announcement but the Government wrote recently informing Khazanah that I am now an adviser to Proton," said Dr Mahathir, who is also adviser to national oil corporation Petrolia Nasional Bhd.

Dr Mahathir launched Proton in 1983 as part of Malaysia's industrialisation drive. He said the company

now needed partnerships, but on its own terms.

"Proton, I think, wants to remain Proton, remain a Malaysian company, but it is not against foreign alliances."

But, Dr Mahathir ruled out the idea of control passing to a partner who might ditch the Proton marque and push for what would amount to a local assembly operation for foreign models. "In that case, the engineering capability of Proton would be very low.

"There are quite a Dumber of foreign companies that are keen to work with Proton. I think eventually, the terms will be accepted," he said.

Though Dr Mahathir declined to give specifics on partners or strategy saying he first needed a full briefing from the company, he gave some broad indications of his thinking..

"Generally, Proton must be competitive, without any protection and they need to take on a foreign strategic partner." —Reuters