

THE PROTON REVEALED

I tried and failed several times to meet Tun Dr Mahathir, says Proton chief



Azlan met with a wall of silence

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KUALA LUMPUR: Proton chairman Datuk Azlan Hashim tried to meet Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad several times this year to answer his lingering doubts on the sale of Italian bike maker MV Agusta and other issues at the national car maker.

But all he got was a wall of silence — a revelation which turns on its head assertions that the national car company's adviser was kept out of the loop over developments at Proton.

"A meeting requires two consenting people or more to come together. Let me tell you that we have made various attempts to arrange appointments and he has not been available.

"I understand because he is, of course, very busy and he will, I suppose, give us an appointment when he is ready," Azlan told a news conference after the launch of Proton's latest Satria Neo model.

The *New Straits Times* understands that on at least five occasions, Azlan attempted to get an appointment to meet Dr Mahathir. It is unclear why the chairman of the Proton board was rebuffed. Attempts to obtain comments from the former Prime Minister last night were unsuccessful as he was attending a private function.

Azlan made this disclosure when asked to clarify complaints in the media by Dr Mahathir that he was still waiting for answers on why MV Agusta was disposed for one euro to Gevi Spa.

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Azlan's comments also are the first in a series of responses by government agencies and ministries to questions raised by Dr Mahathir — questions which led the former Prime Minister to launch a scathing personal attack on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his administration last week.