

'APs cornered by handful of companies'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Proton adviser Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today claimed among the factors that contributed to the adverse sales of Proton cars were the 67,000 Approved Permits (APs) issued last year.

Dr Mahathir said of this number, 12,600 were given to 82 companies while 20 firms were given the remaining 54,400 APs, which are used to import cars into the country.

Dr Mahathir read the figures from a small notepad filled with handwritten notes and figures.

From the disparity in numbers of the APs awarded, the former Prime Minister claimed that there "seemed to be some irregularities."

"Why is there a small number of companies getting such a big amount of APs?" he asked, adding that he was not questioning the wisdom of the people who issued the permits.

However, it does not keep

"At RM11,000 it is hardly possible to buy the components, not to mention putting them together," he said.

He added that the same cars, when landed in Singapore, Australia and other countries, cost twice as much.

He said during his tenure as Prime Minister, he had directed a Minister to investigate the price of these cars.

However, the minister concerned did not make any attempt to do so. He did not name the minister but it appears that he was referring to minister of International Trade and Industry, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

"Even after I pointed out how to investigate the matter, no investigation was conducted and the cars continued to be imported at this ridiculous price," he said.

He said these imported CBU cars compete unfairly with Proton as the cost of the national car was higher.

He also said the decision to