

Dr Mahathir says revenge behind sale of Proton
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The former prime minister claims the government could afford to keep Proton if it had not used tax revenue to buy political support.

PETALING JAYA: Dr Mahathir Mohamad today escalated his bitter row with the government of Prime Minister Najib Razak by alleging the decision to sell Proton was driven by a “blood feud” at the expense of national dignity.

“The sale of Proton was forced due to a blood feud. Dignity is of no relevance. Vengeance is more important,” he wrote in his latest blog post.

He said the government could afford to keep Proton and did not need to sell it to China-based Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co Ltd, if it had not used tax revenue from the people to buy political support.

He also questioned the claim that the government had paid RM1.7 billion to Proton.

“The RM1.7 billion which was supposed to be given to Proton actually did not reach the company as far as I know,” he said.

DRB-Hicom Berhad, the parent company of Proton Holdings, announced on May 24 that it had agreed to sell a 49.9% stake in the national carmaker to Geely, which had earlier taken over Swedish auto company Volvo.

Proton, set up in 1983 during Mahathir’s premiership, has been struggling against stiff competition from rival carmakers in recent years, losing market share despite government support.

Its market share of 53% in 2001 dropped to 14% last year, amid rising popularity of imports and questions over the quality of Proton’s products.

Dr Mahathir said the sale of Proton was an admission that “we have failed and our objective to make Malaysia a developed nation has been thwarted”.

He also asked what had happened to the money raised from taxes the government imposed on the people.

According to him, the taxes imposed on the people were higher now compared to the heydays of Proton, but the government was still burdened by high debts.

“If we scrutinise the profits of businesses in Malaysia today, the tax revenue collected should be higher than during the time when Proton cars were in great demand. Instead, the government’s debts soared.

“Where has the government’s money gone? Did it go into this or that pocket?”

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