

## **Proposed new car project will boost Malaysian engineering prowess**

**BERNAMA**

**12/06/2018**

**From Abdul Muin Majid**

TOKYO, June 12 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that having a new national car project would help boost Malaysia's engineering capability.

The Prime Minister noted that when he first started the Proton car project back in the 1980s, Malaysia had no knowledge whatsoever about how to build cars but gradually acquired the knowledge to design, build and mass-produce cars over a period of more than two decades.

"Unfortunately Proton has been sold to the Chinese who have been given the right to manage Proton. So Malaysia now is not making use of those skills," he told Malaysian journalists at the conclusion of his three-day working visit to Japan on Tuesday.

Dr Mahathir, who first disclosed plans for the new national initiative for Malaysia at the Nikkei Conference here yesterday, said there was a need to create opportunities for Malaysian engineers to do things on their own in Malaysia.

He had pointed out that Proton was no longer a national car.

At today's press conference, Dr Mahathir said quite a lot of Malaysian engineering companies had to close down because they could not supply items according to the demand of the new owners or managers of Proton.

"We need to revive them because the whole idea about investing in a national car is not just about building a national car, it's about becoming a catalyst for growing the Malaysian engineering capability," the prime minister said.

He said that was exactly what happened with the Proton project.

Dr Mahathir said the automotive industry is a very big market.

"All over the world people are outsourcing parts of motorcars, we can produce parts for branded cars in Malaysia and export them which will earn us a lot of foreign exchange," he said.

Dr Mahathir said whoever wants to be involved in the new car project should submit a proposal.

"If the proposal is good, we have to give the opportunity to them. However, we don't want to give the licence to people for them to sell (to another party). This is something that this government will stop," he said.

"If we give the licence to that person, that person must do the work. If he's found to be selling the licence to somebody else, we'll take it back," he added.

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