

# Dr M disappointed with SC's silence on sale

NST - 14/2/2006

PUTRAJAYA, Mon. — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed disappointment over the Securities Commission's silence on the sale of MV Agusta for €1.

The former prime minister said the SC had the right to an explanation from Proton because, in selling the Italian motorcycle maker, it "gave away almost RM400 million just like that in a manner that gave rise to a lot of questions".

"They say the SC is supposed to study this matter but until now there has been no comment from the SC, as if the matter is so sacred and nobody can comment on it," he said when met after receiving former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Proton adviser, said: "You sell at the price of €1. Did you tell other people you are going to sell?"

"Were there other bids? Was there only one bid? Questions need to be asked."

He was responding to questions pertaining to former Proton chief executive officer Tengku Mahaleel Tengku Ariff's comments today on the lack of details over the sale of MV Agusta.

Proton, in an announcement to Bursa Malaysia in December, said the disposal was consistent with its direction of divesting non-core assets.

Proton has yet to respond to the queries from Dr Mahathir and Tengku Mahaleel.

The company issued a statement last month saying it had made the necessary announcement to Bursa Malaysia with regard to the MV Agusta transaction and, therefore, would not issue any more statements on the matter.

Concurring with Tengku Mahaleel's remarks, Dr Mahathir said: "Obviously it was not done the correct way, to give away RM400 million. Now the chance to recover the money is gone because it (MV Agusta) has been given away."

In disagreeing with criticisms that



**DR MAHATHIR:** Questions need to be asked

the purchase of MV Agusta, when he was prime minister, was a "stupid" move, Dr Mahathir said the decision to buy the Italian company was not made overnight but took 14 months.

"Here is a company that is relatively cheap and we know its capacity. But someone easily said that it is up for sale for just €1. I can't imagine."

He also said those without engineering knowledge would not be able to run an automotive company.

This was why the matter should

be seen in terms of technological as well as financial losses.

"If you want technology, you take a partner who has the technology. If you can buy the technology, you buy the technology. Other countries are all buying technology," he said.

Describing MV Agusta as the best motorcycle maker in the world, Dr Mahathir added: "In the world of motorcycles, this is the Rolls-Royce, and you give it away for €1. And what are you going to do with that €1?" — Bernama