

# Dr M: I had<sup>24</sup> to defer my plans for 5/5/10/98 retirement

TOKYO: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he has deferred his retirement plans because of the economic situation and to observe the work of his would-be successor.

"I will be 74 next year — a good time to retire. But I will have to observe my would-be successor.

"Sometimes they change their minds or misbehave. I cannot, just because of my own wish to retire, make a decision which is not good for the country," the Prime Minister said.

He said the Umno general assembly next year would decide on his successor.

"I will have to give some time to my successor to do his work before I step down. I don't know how long this will take.

"If the economy and the country are stable, I'll have no problem retiring," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Umno had several people who were capable and he would abide by the party's wishes regarding his successor.

"My intention originally was to step down this year after the Apec meeting, then my deputy would take over. But because of the economic problem I feel I must stay on to handle a very difficult problem," he said.

Asked whether he told anyone of his plan to step down, he said he did not because it would have caused a lot of problem to the party, adding:

"Practically there would then be two heads of government and people would want to position themselves so that the incoming PM does not feel that they are not very supportive."

Dr Mahathir said that last year he took a two-month holiday overseas to see how Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim managed the country without him.

"Unfortunately towards the end of that period, there was this currency problem. Whereas I was quite satisfied with his management of the country, I found that he was not able to handle the currency crisis," he added.