

PM: I will
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continue

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he will continue to criticise wrongdoing in the West and underlined his intention of staying in power for the time being.

"I don't think I can change the image because I will continue to condemn the West and their press if they do anything wrong," Dr Mahathir said in an interview with the Mainichi Shimbun published in Tokyo yesterday.

"They hate me for that. They would like to see me go and so they will always give me a bad image," he told the Japanese newspaper.

"The important thing is what people in this country think of me," said. "As you can see, despite the Western media calling me a dictator, the Malaysian people gave my party a three-fourths majority."

He also said he was ready to step down only if major problems in the country can be solved.

"Frankly, I would like to retire as soon as possible. But I also have to be responsible." Dr Mahathir said.

"I just cannot walk out and leave everything in a state of not being prepared for continuing the progress of this country," he said.

"So, whether I like it or not, I have to stay, and I have to see that the people are in place who can carry on the work," he said.

"I think when the major problems are solved I will step down. I cannot say when," he added.

In the interview, Dr Mahathir stressed that his economic measures, including his controls on the Malaysian currency, helped the country achieve a quicker recovery from the Asian economic crisis than other nations in Asia.

"The Malaysian economy has turned around, and it is doing very well, much better than other countries, which have also turned around," Mahathir said.

"In Malaysia, because the currency is fixed and stable, we can do other things, such as reducing interest rates," he said.

"We can promote sales of property, or of cars," he said. "We can help Malaysian companies to recover and so contribute to economic growth."

"I must admit that these two years have been one of the toughest times because of a combination of the attack on the economy by outside people over which I had no control," he said.

But he added: "Life without problems would be very dull. Problems are exciting challenges." —
AFP