

Mahathir looks forward to sleeping in

sun u/10/03
KUALA LUMPUR: After 22 years as prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad has revealed that getting out of bed late in the morning is what he is looking forward to most when he retires at the end of this month.

This latest ambition, which the energetic premier shares with most of the world's workers, is disclosed in a new book launched yesterday entitled **Mahathir: 22 years, 22 voices**.

The "voices" are those of world leaders who paid tribute to the 77-year-old Mahathir, while the snippet about his sleeping dream comes from a recent interview with editor Michael Bociurkiw.

The interview also touch-

es on his views of other leaders, and there are few surprises there.

Asked on his prickly relations with Singapore's former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, he said they initially "really didn't get on well" when both were in the Malay Federation parliament before Singapore became independent in 1965.

"I remember disturbing his lectures. Because he had a tendency to lecture in the parliament so I used to interrupt and ask him questions. He didn't take very kindly to that. But subsequently we became quite friendly."

Former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher dubbed the **Iron Lady** by the Soviet Union during the Cold

War. once said of Mahathir: "We both believe in speaking our minds. It's just as well he is a man, for he'd have been lethal with a handbag."

Asked whether he agreed with this assessment, Mahathir replied: "I suppose she understands the usefulness of a handbag better than I do."

"But I think, in a way, what she says is right. We both like to speak our minds. We don't think in terms of being popular all the time."

"I think that is what leadership is all about," said the man whose ambition led Malaysia to build the world's tallest building, the Petronas Towers, while dragging itself from the economic backwaters into the mainstream of Asian development.

But asked what he would do when he takes a day off after stepping down, he replied: "Get up late from bed! I want to rest a little bit, I want to feel the freedom of not having to go to the office on time."

He reiterated that he would not follow the example of Lee Kuan Yew, who took the post of senior minister in 1990.

"But I have a commitment to the party, which enabled me to come to this position."

"I think I owe them and because of that I will continue to work for the party at the ground level."

"Maybe speaking for them, even during elections. It's the kind of thing I think I should do." he said. — AFP