

Stay active, less sleep is Dr M's secret to life

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IT was 8.30am on a Friday and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had just arrived at Yayasan Albukhary in Kuala Lumpur. There was already a line of people waiting to see the Prime Minister.

Later, as we walked into the room, he looked up at us from a book he was reading at the desk on the far end of the room.

Once his aide fixed the microphone on him, he walked over to the sofa, looking sprightly in a blue Nehru suit, and smilingly said: "You are all here to grill me."

Dr Mahathir, who will turn 94 in July, amazes many people with his energy and stamina. The indefatigable leader, who returned as the country's Prime Minister for the second time, is still able to deliver a speech for hours and pack in numerous functions late into the night.

His secret to all that boundless energy? "Less sleep and staying active," he said.

"Sometimes, I also can't climb the stairs but I believe that in looking after my physical self, I don't overeat and don't grow fat, and I am active.

"If you are not active, then you become weak. When you sleep, you weaken yourself. When you do exercise, you are using your muscles more. But when you lie down, you fade away," said Dr Mahathir.

Asked how many hours of sleep he gets nowadays, he said he tries to sleep from 11pm to 6am.

"But sometimes, I can't. I come home at 2am and have a short sleep and I have to go to work.

"If you get tired and go to bed and do not think, do not conceive ideas, do not argue, you don't find solutions to problems, if you don't use your brains - it loses the capacity.

"I sometimes forget words - in speeches or in answering questions. I have to make up with other words. That is an ageing process. But you don't have to age faster by lying down," he said.