

MANY BACK OUR POLICY

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PETALING JAYA, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the support he received at the Vienna conference was the result of an all-out effort by friends who back Malaysia's tough stand on the drug menace.

The Prime Minister said there were some people who had said that Malaysia was not popular and respected because of some of its policies — one of which was the death penalty for drug traffickers.

"Many campaigned against this sentence. But I want to stress here that when I was in Vienna, I met leaders of other countries and they expressed support for our stand," Dr Mahathir told a

race and accepted the post of chairman of the main committee.

Dr Mahathir said his election to the post was largely due to the efforts of certain big nations.

"Many of those who supported me were from the Latin American and Caribbean countries which normally back leaders from their own fold," he said.

"I was moved by their support and this goes to show that Malaysia has a lot of friends around the world," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that before the conference, there was apprehension among most of the 138 participating countries about Malaysia's policy on drug trafficking.

"However, after we had explained our stand to them in separate discussions, they began to see that our policy makes sense."

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crowd of 20,000 which had turned up at Subang airport to welcome him back from Vienna.

Cabinet Ministers, leaders of Barisan component parties and other dignitaries were also present.

Umno Youth presented Dr Mahathir with a *selempang* (sash), *tengkolok* (a headgear traditionally worn by warriors and statesmen) and a *keris*.

Dr Mahathir said some of the leaders told him that they would like to adopt the same policy but could not do so because of strong opposition from certain quarters in their countries.

The Prime Minister was elected president of the United Nations' sponsored International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking after Bolivian Foreign Minister Dr Guillermo Ben Dregal withdrew from the

"Many countries which were said to have 'hated' Malaysia for its death penalty became our greatest supporters."

Dr Mahathir said he was also moved by the large crowd which had turned up to welcome him back.

This, he said, was a reflection of the rakyat's support for the country's tough stand against drugs and traffickers.

"I believe, and all of us do, that drugs are dangerous and can weaken the nation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was glad that the Vienna conference had adopted a resolution to consolidate the efforts of all countries in the fight against the drug menace.

"We should be proud that we are not alone in the war against drugs," he added.