

# Foes now friends, says PM

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## Mahathir: Former critics trying to forge better ties with Malaysia

**PETALING JAYA, Thurs:** Malaysia's relationship with other countries have improved tremendously and even its former critics are making efforts to forge better ties with us, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Countries that had criticised the government's actions in 1998 have now abandoned their attempts to smear the country's image, he said.

"They had criticised us for being undemocratic,

unfair and others ... but today they want to forge better relationships with us. Most of them admitted that our actions were right and appropriate," he said in his National Day address.

Mahathir said the developed countries see Malaysia as an example and this is evident with the presence of more than 100 foreign ambassadors in Kuala Lumpur.

"We do not take sides but maintain a good relationship with all.

"We have a free policy and we are not scared to voice objections against any unfairness. They were not happy with this.

"Even the foreign media had no good response on us. They often tarnish the country's image, criticise us and divert the investors' and tourists' interest from Malaysia.

"They have succeeded in their effort but now there is a growing number of investors who do not believe the bad image portrayed by these foreign media.

"When they come here, they will realise how inaccurate the reports were."

Mahathir said the government had always upheld the rule of law and has never been selective in their administration.

"All Malaysians are treated equally no matter who they are. Even the elite is not given special treatment."

He said foreigners who are hoping for the present government to be toppled by their favourite candidate have now realised that

their choice is not suitable.

"They realise that those who try to take over the present government are extremists and misuse Islam. This reality disappoints them and their effort to tarnish our image has decreased."

Mahathir said the country continues to develop based on the efforts and efficiency of the various communities, but the Malay community remains backward.

"Their belief that they would be safe forever has

resulted in them being disunited in defending their rights.

"They believe that whoever becomes the government, the good treatment they have received will continue."

Mahathir said this resulted in the Malays not being able to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge.

"Their split has become worse as they do not want to meet and discuss the problems and danger their community will face."