

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	11/4/2013

# PM extends condolences to Britons

NST - 11/4/2013

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, on behalf of himself, the Malaysian government and its people, yesterday extended condolences to Britain on the death of former prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

The message of condolence was relayed to British Prime Minister David Cameron.

Najib said Britain had lost a great leader while the world had lost a statesman.

"Her loss will be felt in many places across the globe, especially among Commonwealth nations. Through you (Cameron), please extend my deepest sympathies to the family of the late Baroness Thatcher on her passing."

Najib said Thatcher was Britain's first female prime minister and its longest-serving, making her among the most accomplished leaders of her time.

He described her as "a good friend to Malaysia" during her tenure and as someone who had propelled bilateral relations between both countries to new and stable levels. Thatcher served as prime minister from 1979 to 1990.

Meanwhile, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday paid tribute to the former leader, calling her a colleague and a friend who shared similar traits with him.

"Her way of doing things was a lot like mine. We understood each other. Our approach was somewhat similar even though she was working (in the interest of) her country and I was working for mine."

Thatcher assumed office in 1979, two years before Dr Mahathir rose to the same position in Malaysia. Dr Mahathir said his relationship with



**Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad signing the condolence book for former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher at the residence of the British high commissioner in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Pic by Farizul Hafiz Awang**

Thatcher, who died of a stroke on Monday, had its fair share of ups and down.

Things between them were strained at some points, with frequent disagreements between Malaysia and Britain leading to Malaysia boycotting the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 1981 and 1983. "But our friendship slowly improved over the years to the point that Malaysia eventually agreed to host CHOGM (in 1989) as well as the Commonwealth Games (1998)."

Dr Mahathir said bilateral ties between Malaysia and Britain had been strongest during Thatcher's reign, with both leaders according

each other immense respect and admiration.

"I had a better personal relationship with Thatcher than with any of her successors, and the link between Malaysia and the United Kingdom also changed (after she was replaced as prime minister). It hasn't been the same since. She took a very personal interest in Malaysia."

Dr Mahathir said Thatcher's leadership had saved her country

from economic and social turmoil, and expressed sadness and regret over those celebrating her death.

"She has been described quite harshly by some... it's not nice.

"In a way, she stopped the rot that

was setting in the UK at the time — the country was going down very fast before she became PM," he said after meeting British High Commissioner to Malaysia Simon Featherstone at his official residence.

Dr Mahathir signed a condolence book in Thatcher's memory, in which he wrote: "My condolences to her family and the British people. May she rest in peace."

The book was also signed on behalf of the government by Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister A. Kohilan Pillay.

He said Thatcher's leadership and friendship with Malaysia were greatly admired.

"Relations between the two countries have become stronger. The late baroness was a great leader who led UK through challenging times and transformed a nation, earning her greater international standing."

**"Her loss will be felt in many places across the globe, especially among Commonwealth nations."**  
**Datuk Seri Najib Razak**