

**Dr M says he and Thatcher cut from same cloth**  
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**By Emily Ding**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 15 — Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has compared himself to the late Margaret Thatcher and finds they were similar in character.

The political relationship between the two leaders was one of mutual respect, though it did not start off well when Dr Mahathir led the “Buy British Last” campaign in the early 1980s to boycott all British goods during Thatcher’s reign as Britain’s prime minister, following the latter’s decision to charge higher fees for overseas students.

“I think our characters were about the same. I wasn’t copying her in any way, I have always been like that,” he told The New Straits Times in an interview today.

Thatcher, popularly known as the “Iron Lady”, dominated British politics for two decades, leading the Conservatives from 1979 to 1990.

“She was willing to stick her neck out. When she wanted to do something, she would do it, even though it would make her extremely unpopular,” he said.

“She was brave enough to do (what she did) because the UK was going down the drain. The unions were so powerful that they could frustrate every scheme put up by the government... So, as a result, she had to stop the unions.”

Similarly, The New Straits Times suggested to Dr Mahathir that he had carried on with projects that were previously seen as unpopular, such as the Penang Bridge and the Petronas Twin Towers here.

“It was common sense! You needed the bridge. Of course, there will be people, especially those in the opposition — they will oppose anything!” he said.

“They even opposed this building (Petronas Twin Towers)... but now, it is called a Malaysian icon. Every one comes to see it,” he added.

Thatcher, the only woman prime minister in British history, died last Monday from a stroke at 87.

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