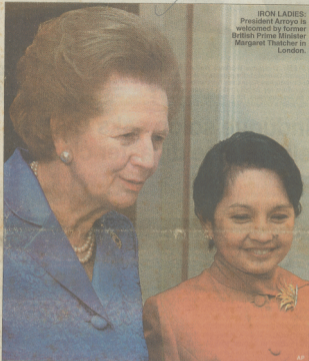


**IRON LADIES:**  
President Arroyo is  
welcomed by former  
British Prime Minister  
Margaret Thatcher in  
London.



## Two 'Iron Ladies' meet

By MARICHU VILLANUEVA

LONDON (via PLDT) - It takes one to know one.

Sparks did not fly when Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Margaret Thatcher, both christened "Iron Lady" at separate times by the press, met for tea yesterday at the visiting Philippine president's hotel suite.

The 54-year-old Mrs. Arroyo, recently dubbed the "Iron Lady of Asia" by the *Financial Times* of London and teased by *Time* magazine with the title "Iron Lady?," got some unsolicited advice from the original "Iron Lady."

"President Arroyo was like a student getting tips from a great leader," Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao said.

It was not immediately known, however, if Mrs. Thatcher's tips included ways to keep Mrs. Arroyo's husband Jose Miguel away from controversy. The Arroyos have said repeatedly that Mrs. Thatcher's husband Dennis was their role model for a woman leader's spouse.

Tiglao said the two feisty women had a "very lively, animated exchange of views" about leadership.

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Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, who was in Mrs. Arroyo's entourage, said he gave the former British prime minister a copy of the *Time* magazine issue with Mrs. Arroyo on the cover.

"I wonder who's 'Iron lady 1' and 'Iron Lady 2'?" Perez quot-

ed Mrs. Thatcher as saying.

In an official statement about the meeting, Malacañang quoted Mrs. Thatcher as telling the visiting leader: "I am pleased that you are now president. You have all my good wishes. I'll watch everything that goes on. I'm sure all will go well."

Ambassador to the Court of St. James-Cesar Bautista said that Mrs. Thatcher, first woman prime minister of the United Kingdom, still wields considerable influence in the UK. She now holds the title "baroness" and sits in the House of Lords.

"Lady Thatcher has an elder statesman's role and President Arroyo sees her as a role model," Bautista said.

"After an exchange of ideas, they have found that they have similarities. However, Lady Thatcher said this generation of leaders is more challenging and tough because of the terrorism issue," the envoy added.

Mrs. Thatcher, who led her nation in war in the Falklands against Argentina, also expressed concern during their meeting

about the world's growing population. She said the problem could be addressed by providing the people with quality education.

"We have to get the very best teachers, particularly in mathematics and science. We might have a better chance," she said.

Mrs. Arroyo, in turn, told Mrs. Thatcher she looks at her as a model "for the rest of us to follow."

Meanwhile, the Chief Executive has gained a new phone pal in London — Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Bautista disclosed that Blair asked President Arroyo during their 30-minute meeting in his official residence at No. 10 Downing St. to "call me by phone in case you want to talk to me."