

29 JUL 1997

KINGS CONGRATULATES VANUATU

KUALA LUMPUR, July 29 (Bernama) -- The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar has sent a congratulatory message to Vanuatu President Jean-Marie Leye on the occasion of the republic's 17th year of Independence tomorrow.

His majesty wished existing ties between Malaysia and the south west Pacific nation would be enhanced, the foreign ministry said in a statement today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad also sent a similar message to his Vanuatu counterpart Serge Vohor.

In a congratulatory message to his Vanuatu counterpart Willie Timmy, foreign minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi expressed confidence that relations between the two countries could be further strengthened.

Vanuatu, comprising a group of islands of 14,762 sq km in size west of Fiji, was formerly under Anglo-French administration since 1906.

It gained independence on July 30, 1980. It has a population of about 150,000 and its capital is Vila. -- BERNAMA

SLR rn