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Malaysia believes excellent ties with Britain will continue

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MALAYSIA believes its excellent ties with Britain will continue with the landslide victory by Labour Party leader Tony Blair in the UK election.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Malaysia welcomes the decision of the British public and congratulated Blair on his appointment as the new British prime minister.

"I believe we will continue the excellent relations between Malaysia and the UK.

"I am sure Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will look forward to an early meeting with Blair," he said at a press conference to announce the new Selangor Menteri Besar in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Dr Mahathir is on a week-long tour of three African countries which began on Thursday.

Reuter reports: Britain's European partners yesterday welcomed the Labour Party's landslide general election victory and expressed hope a new government under Mr Tony Blair would be an easier partner in European integration.

Farther afield, US President Bill Clinton congratulated Blair on his party's victory while Asian states did the same. There was little impact in Hong Kong, due to revert to Chinese sovereignty in less than two months.

Few tears were shed across the EU over Mr John Major's thumping defeat, but the other 14 nations in the group were unsure whether Blair's arrival would relax Britain's prickly attitude to key issues of sovereignty.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, speaking in Brunei during an Asian tour, said the poll showed Britons did not like anti-European polemics.

In France, which is caught in the throes of campaigning for its own two-stage parliamentary election on May 25 and June 1, President Jacques Chirac said in a message to Blair that he would be happy to meet him soon in the French capital. The invitation was informal and no dates were mentioned.

In Australia, the nation's opposition Labor Party cheered Blair's landslide and said his success was in part a result of the lessons he learned from the Australian Labor Party.

Conservative Prime Minister John Howard also congratulated Blair.

Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said relations between India and Britain were "very good" and hoped to further their close ties. He told reporters he had invited Blair to visit.

Hong Kong's political leaders and businessmen failed to see what the fuss was about and said Britain's political scene was now largely irrelevant to the territory's future.

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