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DR MAHATHIR CONGRATULATES NEW INDIAN PM

KUALA LUMPUR, March 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has congratulated India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Atal Behari Vajpayee on his election as India's new prime minister.

In his message, Dr Mahathir said the traditionally close relations between Malaysia and India had in recent years expanded into new areas of cooperation, both at the government and private sector levels.

Dr Mahathir also said that the increasing contacts at the people-to-people level had further strengthened the bonds of friendship between the two countries.

"I look forward to working closely with you to further develop and deepen the close ties and friendship between Malaysia and India," he added.

Vajpayee took office as India's 14th prime minister yesterday.

He leads a coalition government after the BJP emerged as the largest party from deadlocked national elections but short of a majority. --

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