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Message from the High Commissioner for India

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THE new millennium is especially significant as India celebrates its 50th Anniversary of Republic Day on January 26 this year. The Golden Jubilee marks half a century of evolution of India as a republic and the celebration of our Constitution. India has become the world's largest democracy, with people highly conscious of their political rights. All Indians enjoy full rights, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. India is a living example of a pluralistic society, where all religious faiths freely intermingle, while they practice their respective chosen paths.

The new millennium also beckons us to achieve what could not be attained during the last 50 years. The Government of India is committed to liberalisation of its economy, but with the added objective that benefits accrue to all people. Special attention is being paid to social infrastructure which is aimed at ameliorating the conditions of poor people. While the Indian economy has made strides in every sector, the benefit of economic development are not visible at per capita level because of increasing population. We have to adopt innovative approaches to seriously tackle the growth in population.

India is committed to world peace and recognises that the whole world is one community as epitomised in the saying `Vasudaiva Kutumbakam' (The whole world is one family). This has been India's credo much before Globalisation became a catchword. It has contributed meaningfully in international fora and is prepared to play its role in the future. We recognise peace is important for development and have always extended our hand of friendship to our neighbours.

India-Malaysia relations are embedded in history. India regards Malaysia as a valued partner in all spheres. The relationship is based on strong political ties. It is a multi-faceted cooperation in all spheres - economic, commercial, education, tourism, science and technology and defence. The strength of the relationship lies in people-to-people contacts as they share common values and aspirations. We appreciate our Malaysian friends' wholehearted support in generously contributing for the victims of the recent floods in Orissa.

India-Malaysia relationship has stood the test of time, as both the countries have stood by each other, both in good as well as difficult times. India positively responded to Malaysia's concerns on the need to look at existing international financial architecture and dollarless trade. Malaysia's exports to India picked up during 1997 to 1999, as India emerged as an important importer of palm oil. India is participating in railway projects, linked to import of palm oil. A new South-South cooperation is emerging bilaterally as well as multilaterally, where both the countries are looking at opportunities to jointly work in third countries.

India, on its part, is also emerging as Malaysia's partner in Human Resource Development and Information Technology - areas identified for cooperation by the Prime Minister of Malaysia during his visit to India in December 1996, where he was conferred the prestigious Nehru Award on International Understanding.

A new impetus is being given to this relationship during the last few years by giving practical shape to the Smart Partnership concept, as envisioned by Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad. This has become possible by recognising the strengths and needs of each other. Malaysia is getting

increasingly involved in infrastructure projects, such as roads, ports, telecommunications, where it has acquired considerable expertise.

Malaysia was accorded the status of Partner Country for the first time in the INFRANET '99 - an International Conference on Infrastructure Projects held in New Delhi in December 1999.

The special supplement on 'Focus on India' published by Malaysian Business in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of India's Republic Day captures certain facets of our bilateral relationship, based on mutual respect and shared common values, and the desire to further strengthen the same. The articles focus on areas such as Information Technology (IT) and infrastructure projects among others. This is a commendable effort and in its own little way would help in further promoting cooperation between our two nations and two peoples.