

PM hopes for close Thai ties

BANGKOK: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi hopes that bilateral ties and co-operation between Malaysia and Thailand will remain close under the leadership of Surayud Chulanont.

In this congratulatory message on Surayud's appointment as prime minister, Abdullah said he was looking forward to working closely with Surayud to enhance and deepen bilateral relations and pursue common objectives in Asean.

"On behalf of the government

and people of Malaysia, I would like to extend my best wishes on your appointment," Abdullah said in his message, which was released by the Thai Foreign Ministry.

The prime minister said Surayud's appointment undoubtedly comes at a most challenging time in forging national unity and reconciliation.

"I am confident that under your leadership you will be able to successfully lay the foundations for the re-establishment of democra-

cy in Thailand," Abdullah said.

The former army chief was appointed prime minister on Oct 1 by the Thai military that ousted Thaksin Shinawatra in a coup on Sept 19.

Surayud will serve as the interim prime minister for about one year, with the task of overseeing the drafting of the new constitution.

He will hand power over to a civilian government once elections are held in October next year.—Bernama