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Minorities-Award

INAUGURAL INTERNATIONAL MINORITIES AWARD GOES TO MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR, March 20 (Bernama) -- The inaugural International Minorities and Harmony Award will go to Malaysia in recognition of its track record in protecting the rights of minorities and maintaining peace and harmony.

Convenor of the World Minorities Alliance Julius Salik said in an interview with Bernama here today that the award presentation will take place in Pakistan soon.

"Malaysia, a Muslim country, practises no discrimination on its minorities. In this 21st Century, Malaysia enjoys the pride of having a high level of communal and religious harmony. There is no division of class and colour," he said.

"Malaysia not only practised religious freedom but provided public holidays for all religions, something which is missing in many other countries claiming to be champions of democracy and human rights.

Salik, a former Pakistan federal minister for population welfare, is his country's first elected Christian minister.

He said Malaysia also enjoyed political rights where any of its qualified citizens could contest for any posts without facing racial or religious discrimination.

Salik said as a nation which upholds minority rights in accordance with the United Nations Charter, Malaysia deserved the award.

He said Malaysia is a highly regarded member of the international community in safeguarding the rights of its minorities.

"During my visit here, I find the realities on the ground to be much more commendable than hearsay," he said.

Salik, a five-time member of Pakistan's National Assembly, was twice nominated for the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize.

He also commended Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his hard work and dedication in developing Malaysia to become what it is today.

"His vision has brought about political stability and racial harmony. The world should look at Malaysia As a good example for race relations and minorities rights," he added.

The Alliance, which champions the causes of the world's minorities, was formed in 1977.

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