

# ***Nik Aziz in favour of PM's papal visit***

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KOTA BARU: PAS spiritual adviser Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat is in favour of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to accept Pope John Paul II's invitation to visit the Vatican next month.

"Dr Mahathir should make full use of the opportunity to introduce Islam as well as do justice to the religion which is now being portrayed by the West as one that sanctions violence," the Kelantan Menteri Besar told reporters at his house here yesterday.

According to Nik Aziz, it is

in fact obligatory for a Muslim to accept invitations of such nature from non-Muslims.

"As such, I fully agree with Dr Mahathir meeting the Pope, or any (non-Muslim) leader for that matter, so that Islam's message can be shared."

In Kuala Lumpur, Cuepacs, the umbrella body for civil service unions, described Dr Mahathir's impending meeting with the Pope as recognition of him as a statesman and also recognition for the nation.

Cuepacs president Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam said

Malaysians should be proud of the invitation extended by the Roman Catholic Church leader to Dr Mahathir for a visit in conjunction with the Prime Minister's trip to Switzerland and Luxembourg next month.

He said no Malaysian should try to turn the visit into an issue, as Dr Mahathir was seen as the champion of the oppressed.

"Dr Mahathir has stood up for the poor and oppressed be they Muslims or Christians," he said, adding that the meeting would be for the betterment of mankind.