
'PM's trip to Vatican makes sense'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — The International Movement for a Just World today welcomed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's proposed meeting with Pope John Paul at the Vatican next month.

Its president Dr Chandra Muzaffar said the visit makes sense for a leader of a multi-racial and multi-religious country.

"A small but significant Catholic minority has been part of a multi-religious Malaysia for centuries.

"It is a minority which, since Independence, has enjoyed religious, cultural, social, economic and political rights under a Muslim majority Government," he said in a

statement.

Chandra said the Pope would no doubt want to know from Dr Mahathir how Muslims and Catholics have lived together in relative harmony for such a long time in one of the most complex, multi-religious societies in the world.

"Protecting the rights of the non-Muslims, as the Pope is aware, is a fundamental principle of the Islamic faith.

"Dr Mahathir's visit to the Vatican will also be an opportunity to enter into a dialogue with the Pope on not only religious issues but also on common political, economic and social concerns," said Chandra.

He said the Prime Minister and

the Pope have expressed their views with candour and conviction on a whole range of international issues, hence it was important for leaders from different religious backgrounds to talk to one another about critical global challenges affecting the lives of everyone.

He said discussing with people of other faiths was also integral to the Islamic tradition.

"The Prime Minister's forthcoming meeting with the Pope is not only in harmony with Islamic principles and practices, but also a step forward in the long journey to strengthening ties among peoples of different faiths in Malaysia and in the world," added Chandra.