

Decision to meet Pope welcomed

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement today welcomed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to meet Pope John Paul II in the Vatican City next month.

Abim president Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman said the meeting would be meaningful towards addressing global issues from the perspective of inter-faith dialogue.

"I believe this reflects an acknowledgement of Malaysia's voice as representative, though not all, of the Islamic nations ... nevertheless a voice recognised as significant by Pope John Paul," he said.

"We are confident the meeting will involve the exchange of opinions on issues of terrorism as well as current crises especially in West Asia that involves Jews, Christians and Muslims."

Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said the Pope's invitation was an acknowledgement of the Prime Minister a leader of moderate Muslim nations.

"The meeting would clarify the stance of the Muslim world on the Palestinian issues," Hishammuddin said. He said the Palestinian issue not only concerned Muslims as there were also many Palestinians who are Christians.

National Unity Advisory Panel member ~~Datuk Lee Tan~~ Thye said the invitation should be regarded as a great honour as Dr Mahathir was highly respected as a leader of a modern and progressive Islamic nation.

"The visit will be a major step forward in the journey of strengthening ties among the peoples of different faiths in Malaysia and the rest of the world," he said.