

# Vatican invitation a recognition of

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism today welcomed the Prime Minister's upcoming meeting with Pope John Paul II.

Its honorary secretary Thiagaraja Ratnasamy said the visit was timely and a recognition of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a

suitable person to promote inter-religious harmony.

It prayed that the two leaders would find ways to solve the Palestinian problem and to bring peace to the region.

Meanwhile, Bernama reports that Cuepacs, the umbrella body for civil service unions, has described the impending meeting in the Vat-

ican City next month as a recognition of the leader and 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 from June 9 to 12.

## PM's qualities, says Cuepacs

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

"Dr Mahathir has stood up for the poor and oppressed, be they Muslims or Christians. He is recognised as an international leader and the invitation by Pope John

Paul II is a recognition for Malaysia," he said.

Siva said the meeting would be for the betterment of mankind.

"Dr Mahathir is not only a leader of the Muslim world but also recognised by the Western nations as a capable leader who wishes to see the world as a better place to live in," he said.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir confirmed that he had agreed to accept the invitation and that the decision would be endorsed by the Cabinet.

Various parties including the Catholic Church of Malaysia have welcomed the meeting, saying it can enhance relations between Muslims and Christians at the national and international levels.