

Cabinet endorses Vatican visit

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The Cabinet today endorsed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to the Vatican to meet Pope John Paul II on June 7.

Dr Mahathir was invited by the Pope in recognition of his influential leadership in the Muslim world.

"The Cabinet today approved and endorsed the visit," he said after opening the 53rd Fiabci 2002 World Congress here, where he also delivered the keynote address.

The meeting between Dr Mahathir and the Pope has been welcomed by many groups, including the Catholic community, Opposition parties, religious bodies and non-governmental organisations.

Asked to comment on a statement by Parti Rakyat Malaysia which among others, said that his aim was to drum up domestic political support, Dr Mahathir said:

"There will certainly be this misconception. That is not our intention, we only want to do good," he said.

Besides discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Dr Mahathir said he would also raise issues related to Islam, such as the lack of understanding about the religion and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

His meeting with the Pope precedes his official visit to Switzerland and Luxembourg from June 9 to 12.