

Fadzil: Don't use trip for political gain

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KOTA BARU, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's meeting with Pope John Paul next month will not bring much benefit to the Palestinian cause or Muslims in general if it is only for political gain, Pas president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor said today.

He said although the Palestinian issue was obviously a major concern for Muslims worldwide, a positive outcome was not likely to transpire if the Prime Minister was there for "other reasons".

"Yes, it is his right to meet the Pope ... but what can be achieved is left to be seen, especially if it is for political gains," he said after opening an international seminar on Palestine here today.

The seminar, organised by Pas' international affairs bureau, is a prelude to the party's 48th *mukta-mar* (assembly) which starts on Friday.

Dr Mahathir's meeting with the Pope is scheduled for June 7, two days before his trip to Switzerland and Luxembourg.

Fadzil said Dr Mahathir may want to use the visit for political mileage in view of the considerable number of Christians and non-Muslims in the country.

He said Pas, too, have had meetings with leaders of different faiths before, but added: "Of course, the publicity was never to this extent".

Fadzil said on the other hand, if the Prime Minister were to go there with sincere intentions of bringing a message of Islam, then the meeting had a good chance of clearing many issues concerning both faiths.

This was especially so with misunderstandings and long-standing differences between the two religions, and more importantly, the perception among many Christians of Islam.