



PM's visit to Vatican to mark start of closer ties

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Pope John Paul II on Friday will mark the beginning of closer Kuala Lumpur-Vatican relations, Wisma Putra said today.

In a statement, Wisma Putra said the visit would also contribute to the better understanding of Islam and Christianity, and future collaboration in resolving inter-religious conflicts.

Dr Mahathir will be on a working visit to Rome from June 6-8, and on official visits to Switzerland on June 9-11 and Luxembourg on June 11-13.

He will be accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, several ministers, senior government officials and a business delegation. In Rome, Dr Mahathir will meet the Pope and other members of the Government of the Holy See, besides being taken on a tour of the Sistine Chapel.

While in Rome, Dr Mahathir will also visit the Islamic Cultural Centre (Rome Mosque) where he will perform

the Friday prayers.

National Fatwa Council chairman Datuk Dr Ismail Ibrahim will also be in Dr Mahathir's delegation.

On Dr Mahathir's visit to Switzerland, Wisma Putra said the Prime Minister will visit Bern, where he is scheduled to have a meeting with President of the Swiss Federation Kaspar Villiger.

Dr Mahathir is also scheduled to visit the Sauber Petronas facility in Hinwil.

In Zurich, the Prime Minister will meet with selected financiers and attend a dinner hosted by Credit Suisse chief executive officer Lukas Muhlemann. Wisma Putra said Dr Mahathir will also address the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference on June 11 in Geneva.

Dr Mahathir's visit to Luxembourg will be the first official visit by a Malaysian Prime Minister. He is scheduled to have bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker as well as the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Jean Spautz.