

# 'Meeting can help solve Mid-East crisis'

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KUALA LUMPUR: The historic meeting between Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Pope John Paul II on Friday can help bring about a solution to the Middle East crisis, according to several key politicians.

The Prime Minister and the Pope had both called for an international intervention to ease the conflict through the involvement of a third party to separate the Palestinians and the Israelis.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the meeting between two well-known figures was "a step towards world peace."

He said Dr Mahathir had proved that he was a great Muslim leader and Malaysia, under his leadership, had become a modern, moderate and progressive nation.

"The meeting was a great achievement for the country as well as for the region and the world. It is a great step towards world peace," he told reporters at the Selangor MCA convention in Sepang.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, speaking to reporters in Pekan, Pahang, said

international views on the Palestinian cause could now change and gain better recognition with the Prime Minister's papal visit.

This was because both Dr Mahathir and Pope John Paul shared similar views on terrorism and the Middle East issue.

"We also hope their meeting would be followed by an international response to give equal rights to the Palestinians, as this is not an Islamic issue per se," said Najib, who is also Defence Minister.

Puteri Umno pro-tem chief Azalina Othman, describing the Prime Minister as the "Father of Modern Day Islam", said she was proud that the Pope had chosen to meet Dr Mahathir.

"Dr Mahathir has a pragmatic approach of Islam and is a visionary who is millions of miles ahead of others (Muslims)," she said.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said it was an important meeting of which all Malaysians could be proud.

"Dr Mahathir can be described as a statesman of the world," said Samy Vellu.