

29 MAY 2002

Mahathir-Pope

CABINET ENDORSES DR MAHATHIR'S MEETING WITH THE POPE

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today his meeting with Pope John Paul II at Vatican City is scheduled for June 7.

The Cabinet at its meeting today endorsed the Prime Minister's acceptance of the invitation from the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

Speaking to reporters after opening the International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI) World Congress 2002 here, Dr Mahathir said apart from the issue of Palestine, his talks with the Pope would touch on the problem of Islam's image, lack of understanding about Islam and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Vatican talks will precede the Prime Minister's visit to Switzerland and Luxembourg from June 9 to 12.

On the claim by Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) that Dr Mahathir was meeting the Pope to win over Malaysian Catholics before the next general election, the Prime Minister said, ".....that is the wicked thinking of some people."

Dr Mahathir said the government did not have any hidden aim in accepting the invitation and only hoped good to come from it.

The Prime Minister's meeting with Pope John Paul has been welcomed by the Chairman of the PAS Ulama Council Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat.

Nik Aziz, who is Kelantan Menteri Besar, said the meeting should be welcomed as it would enable the head of the Roman Catholic Church to hear Malaysia's and Islam's stand on terrorism in Afghanistan and Palestine.

-- BERNAMA

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