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Mahathir-Pope

DR MAHATHIR TO ARRIVE TOMORROW FOR MEETING WITH THE POPE

By: Mahrus Ibrahim

VATICAN CITY, June 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrives here tomorrow at the invitation of Pope John Paul II for a meeting which is regarded as significant in paving the way for better interfaith understanding.

National Fatwa Council chairman Datuk Dr Ismail Ibrahim, who is here to join Dr Mahathir's delegation, said that the Pope may have wished to meet the prime minister possibly because he was seen as a leader who had been successful in running an Islamic country in which the various races live in peace and prosperity.

"He may have seen how Dr Mahathir has been able to turn Malaysia into a model nation," he told Malaysian reporters who are here to cover the historic event.

The four-eye meeting between Dr Mahathir and the Pope is scheduled for 11am local time (5pm Malaysian time). This is to be followed by a delegation meeting.

Dr Ismail said that following the meeting, Pope John Paul was expected to convey a message to Christians that Islam is not a religion linked with terrorism.

"Islam's image has been undermined by extremists," he said.

Dr Ismail said that he would explain the outcome of the delegation meeting with the various state Muftis.

-- BERNAMA

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