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Mahathir-Vatican

MALAYSIA, VATICAN WANT THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE

By: Mahrus Ibrahim

VATICAN CITY, June 7 (Bernama) -- The Vatican shares Malaysia's view that there should be third party intervention to separate the 'combatants' in the Palestinian issue, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

They also agreed that the third party must try to put an end to terrorism in Palestine through negotiations, he told newsmen after a four-eyed meeting with Pope John Paul II at the pontiff's residence here. He also had talks with the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Angelo Sodano and other Vatican officials.

The Prime Minister's visit here was at the invitation of the 82-year-old pontiff.

Dr Mahathir said the Palestinian issue was discussed at length during talks with Cardinal Sodano.

"When I met the Pope, I went on to make my plea for an end to terrorism in Palestine and the Israeli action against Palestinians," he said.

Malaysia and the Vatican agreed that the causes of terrorism had to be removed, he told newsmen who met him outside the centuries-old papal building.

Dr Mahathir said the issue in Palestine was as much of Islam as it was of people losing their land because Palestinians were being expelled from their land.

"It is not so much religion, it is a fight by people to regain their territory," he said.

However, because most of the Palestinians were Muslims, they attracted a lot of sympathy from fellow Muslims all over the world, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said he was happy that his visit here was fruitful.

"We were able to express our views," he said.

To a question whether diplomatic relations were discussed, Dr Mahathir said the Vatican did not make any request on that.

"But they hoped that in the future relations would be heightened," he said.

On whether he invited the Pope to visit Malaysia, the Prime Minister said he did not think the Pope would be able to accept an invitation.

"But he said he had been to Malaysia when he was not yet the Pope," Dr Mahathir said.

--BERNAMA

MAI AO