

Anwar to meet Pope Francis in Rome soon
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BY YISWAREE PALANSAMY

Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will meet Pope Francis I (pic) during a dialogue session being organised with leaders of several faiths in Rome soon.

However, Anwar, who leads the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) coalition, said he neither sought nor planned the meeting, Malaysiakini reported today.

Announcing his visit to Rome during a public talk in Kubang Semang in Penang yesterday, Anwar appealed to his Permatang Pauh constituents to understand why he would be meeting the Pope.

He explained the Pope requested to meet with several delegates for a discussion and he would be among them.

"There was no problem when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak or former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad met the Pope," he was quoted as saying, in a reference to Najib's meeting with Pope Benedict XVI two years ago.

"But if I do, it would (be seen as) a mistake. The difference is, I did not ask to meet him," Anwar said.

Najib was the second Malaysian prime minister to meet the head of the Catholic Church, after Dr Mahathir met Pope John Paul II in 2002.

In an attempt to avoid controversy over the meeting, Anwar urged his constituents and supporters to help explain his predicament to others who might be unhappy with him.

"They might say I want to convert to Christianity. This is our problem, which is why we continue to fight for freedom, democracy, and change," he said. – September 17, 2013.

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