



## **Fifth meeting of the Working Group on Bilateral Relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church is held**



**DECR Communication service, 29.07.2026**

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, the fifth meeting of the Working Group for the Coordination of Bilateral Relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on July 23–24, 2026.

Representing the Moscow Patriarchate were: Co-Chairman of the Working Group Bishop Kirill of Sergiev Posad and Dmitrov; Secretary of the Working Group and Secretary for Inter-Christian Affairs of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov); and Hieromonk Mark (Akhmatkhanov), staff member of the Secretariat for Inter-Christian Relations of the Department for External Church Relations.

The Malankara Church delegation comprised: Co-Chairman of the Working Group Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos of the Diocese of Northeast America; Metropolitan Abraham Mar Stephanos

of the United Kingdom, Europe and Africa; Fr Ashwin Fernandes, Executive Director of the Department for External Church Relations; and D. Matthew, member of the Church Council.

The following guests were invited to attend the Working Group meeting: Metropolitan Youhanon Mar Demetrios of Delhi, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Malankara Church; Cor Episcopa Philip Thomas, rector of the Malankara parish dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos in Kuala Lumpur; Archimandrite Pavel (Khokhlov), rector of the Church of the Archangel Michael in Kuala Lumpur; Priest Seraphim Choi, clergyman of the Church of the Archangel Michael in Kuala Lumpur; and Hieromonk Job (Urum), Referent at Moscow Theological Academy.

Opening the meeting, the members of the Working Group expressed their gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III for their personal contribution and particular attention to the development of bilateral relations.

During the meeting, the Working Group reviewed its activities since its previous meeting, held on July 18–19, 2025, at the Holy Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius. Further development of cooperation in a wide range of areas was also outlined, as reflected in the joint communiqué adopted at the conclusion of the meeting. The priorities identified included contacts at the hierarchical level, including the **meeting held on March 27, 2026** between Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, and His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, Primate of the Malankara Church, during Metropolitan Anthony's visit to India to attend as an honoured guest the **rite of the consecration of the Holy Myron**, as well as the presence of Malankara Church hierarchs at the Moscow **celebrations** on May 2 this year marking the feast day of St. Blessed Matrona of Moscow; cooperation in international forums, advocacy of traditional values and support for Christians; the development of monastic contacts; cooperation in the media sphere; student exchanges and academic cooperation; exchange of experience in hospital ministry; promoting veneration of the saints of both Churches and organizing reciprocal pilgrimages; cooperation in the diaspora, particularly between the Russian and Malankara parishes in Kuala Lumpur; joint youth projects; initiatives in the field of church culture; and the conduct of bilateral theological consultations.

On July 24, at the invitation of Metropolitan Sergius of Singapore and Southeast Asia, Patriarchal Exarch of Southeast Asia, the members of the Working Group visited the Church of the Archangel Michael in Kuala Lumpur, where they were received by its rector, Archimandrite Pavel (Khokhlov), who spoke about the history and contemporary life of the Russian parish. Archimandrite Pavel then hosted a formal reception in honour of the guests, which was also attended by Priest Seraphim Choi, a clergyman of the Church of the Archangel Michael.

On July 26, concluding their visit, the members of the Working Group attended the Divine Liturgy at the

Church of the Most Holy Theotokos of the Malankara Church in Kuala Lumpur. Following the service, a formal reception was hosted by the Diocese of Malaysia and Australia of the Malankara Church. Among those attending was A.A. Sapozhenkov, Minister-Counsellor of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Malaysia.

“The visit to our parish by representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate is a historic event for us. On this day, we recall with particular joy the previous visit to our church by a representative of the Russian Orthodox Church — now His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’. In 2003, when he was Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad and Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, he did us the great honour of visiting our parish,” said Cor Episcopa Philip Thomas, rector of the church, in his welcoming address.

Fr Philip showed the Russian Church delegation the entry left by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in the parish guestbook 23 years ago, which has been lovingly preserved by the parish.

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