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KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 25 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD CONFIRMED TODAY HE HAD MET PAS LEADERS RECENTLY AND SAID HE WAS SATISFIED WITH THE MEETING.

+I CAN SAY THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET HAS BEEN GOOD,+ HE TOLD BERNAMA AFTER HOSTING A RECEPTION AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE FOR PARTICIPANTS AND JUDGES OF THE NATIONAL QURAN READING COMPETITION.

HE DECLINED TO GIVE DETAILS OF THE MEETING HELD AT HIS OFFICIAL RESIDENCE, SERI PERDANA.

+WE JUST HAD A MEETING. THERE IS NO NEED FOR ME TO ELABORATE,+ HE SAID WHEN ASKED WHAT WAS DISCUSSED.

(A NEWSPAPER REPORT TODAY QUOTED PAS DEPUTY-GENERAL HAJI HASSAN SHUKRI AS CONFIRMING THAT THREE TOP PAS LEADERS HAD MET DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ON APRIL 9 FOR A +HEART-TO-HEART+ TALK ON ISSUES AFFECTING THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY.)

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS UMNO PRESIDENT, DESCRIBED THE MEETING WITH PAS PRESIDENT HAJI YUSUF RAWA, DEPUTY PRESIDENT HAJI FADZIL NOOR AND TREASURER-GENERAL SYED IBRAHIM ABDOUL RAHMAN AS +A MEETING BETWEEN MUSLIMS.+

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ANOTHER NEWSPAPER REPORT SAID SYED IBRAHIM REPRESENTED PAS VICE-PRESIDENT HAJI HADI AWANG WHO WAS ALSO INVITED TO THE MEETING. DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR INDICATED THAT FURTHER MEETINGS MIGHT BE HELD WITH PAS BUT GAVE NO DATES.

THE APRIL 9 MEETING WAS SAID TO HAVE LASTED THREE HOURS AND THE DISCUSSIONS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, DEALT WITH PROBLEMS AFFECTING MUSLIM UNITY IN THE COUNTRY.

HAJI YUSUF RAWA ALSO CONFIRMED THE MEETING, BUT HE WAS REPORTEDLY MYSTIFIED AS TO HOW NEWS ABOUT IT GOT OUT SINCE BOTH SIDES HAD AGREED THERE WAS NO NEED TO MAKE A +BIG FUSS.+

HE SAID THE MEETING WAS IN LINE WITH PAS' CONCEPT OF AN +OPEN ATTITUDE+ AND OF HOLDING DIALOGUES WITH ANYONE, REGARDLESS OF PARTY, RELIGION OR RACIAL ORIGIN. -- MORE

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THESE WERE AIMED AT UPHOLDING THE SANCTITY OF ISLAM AND REMOVING ANY MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE RELIGION, HE SAID.

MEANWHILE, UMNO YOUTH LEADER ANWAR IBRAHIM, WHO WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN PRESENT AT THE MEETING, SAID THE MEETING WAS WITH PAS LEADERS WHO WERE +OPEN-MINDED+ AND NOT THOSE WHO WERE STILL +RAW+.

ENCIK ANWAR, WHO IS AGRICULTURE MINISTER, SAID THOSE IN PAS WHO REFUSED TO ADMIT THAT A DIALOGUE WAS GOING ON BETWEEN THE PARTY AND UMNO WERE AFRAID THEY WOULD LOSE SUPPORT. -- BERNAMA

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