

PAS-UMNO TALKS GET A BOOST

326 APR 1986

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — PAS and Umno leaders are expected to have more meetings after their top leaders had met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to discuss Muslim unity.

Dr Mahathir and PAS deputy president Ustaz Fadzil Noor said today that they were satisfied with the three-hour meeting held at the Prime Minister's residence on Sunday.

"I can say the opportunity to meet has been good," Dr Mahathir told *Bernama* after hosting a reception at Parliament House for participants and judges of the National Quran Reading Competition.

"We just had a meeting. There is no need for me to elaborate," he said when asked what was discussed.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said it was "a meeting between Muslims." He indicated that further meetings might be held with PAS but gave no dates.

Ustaz Fadzil said in Alor Star today that the meeting was the first with Dr Mahathir since he became Prime Minister.

He said they discussed Muslim unity and discrimination in the implementation of certain government policies, such as the unfair distribution of government subsidies.

"Certain groups of people were left out of subsidy

scheme and this had caused disunity among the people," Ustaz Fadzil said.

"Another problem was the intake of government officers and promotion opportunities for civil servants."

Ustaz Fadzil said they also proposed to the Prime Minister various steps to avoid tension among the community, normally created through incidents like the Memali case.

"But no decision was made. We only expressed our opinions and put forward certain suggestions," he added.

Ustaz Fadzil said the issues brought up to the Prime Minister were aimed at fostering unity, especially among the

Muslim community.

"There are many areas where both the ruling party and opposition can contribute although we have different political beliefs and ideology," he added.

Ustaz Fadzil said political conflicts should not be an obstacle for political parties to discuss issues for the betterment of the community.

He said PAS was prepared to meet others, including the non-Muslim community, to discuss issues of common interest and current affairs.

However, he stressed that the meeting with the Prime Minister was informal and had nothing to do with the coming general election.

"It should also not be misconstrued that PAS is likely to rejoin or have an electoral pact with the Barisan Nasional," he added.

In PENANG, PAS president Yusuf Rawa said the meeting with Dr Mahathir was not a dialogue but merely a "friendly" discussion.

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.