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Mahathir - Arqam (pix)

ASHAARI NEED NOT MEET ME, SAYS MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, July 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he would not meet Al-Arqam leader Ashaari Muhammad to resolve problems relating to the movement.

The Prime Minister said the problems could be resolved through discussions with Pusat Islam.

"He considers himself as a world leader... I have not reached that status... I cannot meet him. I think it is better for him to meet with Pusat Islam," he said.

Speaking to reporters after opening the 14th annual meeting of Koperasi Usaha Bersatu (KUB) here, Dr Mahathir said the government's stance on Arqam was that the movement had deviated from the Islamic teachings "and we have to prevent the spread of Arqam's teachings.--more

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Mahathir - Arqam 2 Kuala Lumpur

He said the situation had reached a stage that could endanger peace and security of the nation as such teachings might split the Muslims.

Asked if the movement would be banned, Dr Mahathir said their teachings that would be banned because of the deviation.

"We are not concerned about their attire but their teachings which have deviated from the teachings of Islam," he said.

The government was forced to act now because Arqam followers had gone too far to claim that their leader was of equal status as a prophet.

He regretted that many of the Arqam followers could not understand the true teaching of Islam.--more

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Mahathir - Arqam 3 (last) Kuala Lumpur

Asked on a report from Sydney published today, which said leaders of Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) were considering making the organisation as a trade bloc, he said Malaysia did not agree with the move.

"We don't agree with any move to set up a trade bloc ... we believe in world trading bloc," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he would wait and see if the matter was made an issue at the Apec summit in Indonesia at the end of the year.

"If it is made an issue, our stance is clear. We are against the formation of trade bloc by any group," he said.--Bernama

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