

PM: OSA for those who leak secrets to Arqam

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PENANG: Civil servants who leak government documents to the Al Arqam will be charged under the Official Secrets Act, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the Government took a serious view of the existence of Al Arqam members and sympathisers in the civil service.

"This is what we are worried. The loyalty of these people cannot be depended upon."

Dr Mahathir said he feared that these people would leak confidential information to the movement for their own interests, adding that the OSA would be used against those found to have breached the law.

He was commenting on news reports that the minutes of a Home Affairs Ministry meeting on Al Arqam was obtained by the group.

The Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Rahim Mohamed Noor had said that police suspected it was an inside job and that investigations were under way.

On why the Government had only taken a strong stand against Al Arqam now despite its long existence, Dr Mahathir said this was because its teachings had

deviated greatly.

He said the danger began when the movement deviated from the proper Islamic teachings.

On whether it was true that most Al Arqam members had voted for the Barisan Nasional in elections, he said it was not important whether they supported the coalition.

"If they voted for us,

we accept (but) if they break the law, action will still be taken," he said.

Similarly, he added, if an Umno member committed theft, he would be charged, adding that no one can claim that they were above the law simply because they supported the Barisan.

As for the kind of action to be taken against

Al Arqam leaders once the religious ruling against the group was issued, Dr Mahathir said the government's priority was to correct the teachings to the followers.

"If they persist on sticking to their beliefs, then we can act. We will have to decide the proper form of action," he said.