

PM: Fatwa council to advise on Al Arqam ban

By Farush Khan,
Syed Abu Bakar,
Alex Choong
and Kamarulzaman
Salleh

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Any Government action against the Al Arqam will be based on the advice of the National Fatwa Council, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the council would hold a meeting with all State authorities before deciding whether the movement should be banned based on Islamic points of view.

"If we do not act, we are in the wrong because the Al Arqam has deviated from Islamic teachings," he said when responding to Press queries on possible action against the movement.

He had earlier launched the Veterinary Services Department centenary celebrations at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Asked whether action would be taken against followers of the movement, he said before making any decision, the Government would have to explain the Al Arqam activities to the people.

Dr Mahathir said if the people did not understand because there was no explanation on the matter, they could not be blamed if they were to follow the deviationist movement.

"It is the responsibility of the Government and mass media to explain the matter to the people," he added.

He said that Al Arqam leader Ashaari Muhammad

had claimed that he usually spoke with Prophet Muhammad and other prophets in person.

He said the Government could ban the group but at the same time the Government would not arrest anyone without reason.

"Therefore, we have to explain the issue at hand before we take action against the group or its followers," Dr Mahathir said.

In **Seremban**, Negri Sembilan police detained 13 Al Arqam members, including a 15-year-old boy, during Statewide operations for illegal possession and distribution of pamphlets published by the movement last Friday and yesterday.

Ten people, including the juvenile, were detained here, two in Tampin and one in Port Dickson.

The men, aged between 20 and 40, and the boy were all released on bail today after the police completed their investigations under the Printing Machine and Publication Act 1984.

Under the Act, a person can be fined up to RM20,000 or jailed a maximum of three years or both, if found guilty.

Seremban police chief Assistant Commissioner Nordin Zakaria said the 10 were detained in five places here last Friday between 10am and 2pm for distributing and having pamphlets without a permit from the Home Ministry.

The boy was detained while distributing pamphlets about the movement at the State Mosque at Jalan Datuk Hamzah during Friday prayers.

Nordin said the others, who were travelling in a car and three vans, were detained at police road-blocks set up at various places.

"More than 200 pamphlets containing various information about the movement's activities were confiscated from the detainees.

"Some of these were found in their vehicles," he added.

The 10 had been brought to appear before the magistrate at 9.05am, and placed under police bail at 11.40am.

They were subsequently taken to the district police headquarters before being released at 1.20pm. Their release was greeted by about 15 Al Arqam members outside the district police premises.

In **Tampin**, district police chief Superintendent Hassan Abdul Rahman said two youths, aged 20, were detained while distributing the movement's pamphlets at a nursing school at 10.40am yesterday.

They were released this afternoon.

He said police seized 52 pamphlets from them.

The two are believed to be from an Al Arqam base in Gemencheh.

In **Port Dickson**, district police chief Superintendent Sheikh Mustapha Sheikh Ahmad said a teacher, detained at the Masjid Jamek Jalan Pantai last Friday, was also released on police bail this afternoon.

He said police seized 49 pamphlets printed by the Al Arqam movement which were kept in the boot of his car.

In **Malacca**, a 31-year-old

man from Pernu was detained by police yesterday while distributing 26 pamphlets on the Al Arqam movement at Taman Muzafar Shah in Ayer Keroh.

The man, who claimed to be a member of the Al Arqam branch in Alai near here, was detained about 6.15pm for distributing propaganda pamphlets without permit.

State CID chief Asst Commissioner Mok Siew Hoong said it was an offence to circulate propaganda pamphlets or leaflets without permission from the police.

Meanwhile, in **Kuala Lumpur**, Umno Youth today requested the Government to ban the Al Arqam movement as it had deviated from Islamic teachings and that its leader had designs to take over the Government illegally.

Umno Youth head Tan Sri Rahim Tamby Chik said today that unless the movement's influence was curtailed, it would continue to mislead the Muslims and expose the country to political danger.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the Umno Youth Executive Council meeting at the Umno headquarters here, he said: "Umno Youth had made a unanimous stand that the Al Arqam would mislead the Muslims unless it is banned.

"Furthermore, in the light of the recent 'dare' by Ashaari that a referendum be held to determine whether Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad or he was more popular and fitting to be the country's

leader, it is obvious that Ashaari plans to take over the Government without resorting to legal or constitutional means."

He added that the Al Arqam should be registered as a political party if its leader wished to become a political leader.

He also said that Umno Youth was certain that the Al Arqam had deviated from the true teachings of Islam as it endorsed the Aurad Muhammadiyah belief.

Umno Youth also condemned the Serbs for refusing to accept the latest peace formula of the Western powers and called on the United Nations to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnians to enable them to defend themselves.

He said the refusal of the Serbs to accept the peace formula meant that they planned to wipe out the Bosnians.

"Umno Youth wants to see a more firm and effective action taken against the Serbs," he said.

Rahim said that preparations were under way for the East Asia Youth Leaders Congress which would be attended by youths from various countries.

The 160 participants from Malaysia, Cambodia, China, Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam would discuss "Peace, Stability and Prosperity" of the region.

On the resignation of the 10 pro-tem committee members of Marang Umno division, he said the Umno Youth exco had accepted it.