

PM: We have the evidence to act against Al Arqam

RAWANG, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he was convinced that action would be taken against Al Arqam as the Government had now obtained the necessary evidence to show that the movement propagates deviationist Islamic teachings.

He said there would be less reluctance to act against the group in view of such proof.

"Actually, this time we have got all the evidence. It is clear they have deviated," he said when responding to reporters' questions

at a Press conference after he opened the Perodua car manufacturing plant at Serendah near here.

The Prime Minister was asked whether the Government would act against Al Arqam since doubts had been cast on the movement's activities for a long time.

He said: "Previously, there were those who were not so convinced that Al Arqam is a deviationist group. Now it is clear. I am confident action will be taken."

Al Arqam's activities are being seriously questioned as it is said to practise

teachings which contradict Islam, including the members' cult-worshipping of its self-styled leader Ashaari Muhammad.

Ashaari, who has been living in Thailand, is believed to be planning to move elsewhere since his visa to stay there had expired.

Asked what sort of action would be taken against Ashaari if he returned to the country, Dr Mahathir said:

"If he comes in, he will face government action if he goes against the law."

Asked if this meant arrest or prosecution, the

Prime Minister said: "This I dare not say. It depends on the authorities which carry out the enforcement."

Dr Mahathir had on Saturday given some indication about the deviationist methods of Al Arqam.

Speaking at a Press conference after opening the Gerakan delegates conference in Kuala Lumpur, the Prime Minister said Ashaari had claimed that the Prophet had come to see him and even called him Sir.

He said Ashaari had also claimed himself to be a *Messiah*.