

Dr M: Let Ashaari file charges

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he would be more than happy to answer to any charges that Al Arqam leader Ashaari Muhammad planned to file against him.

"We have enough evidence (to prove) that we don't make baseless accusations," he told reporters after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting yesterday.

On Thursday, Al Arqam said in a statement that Ashaari was likely to take court action against Dr Mahathir for making allegations against him.

The Prime Minister also did not dismiss the possibility of Ashaari facing charges if he returned to the country.

Dr Mahathir said the ban on the movement should not be misconstrued that the government was frightened of it.

"We want to stop their deviant teachings. We do not want tragedies to happen," he said, referring to the death of Christian cult leader David Koresh and his followers in Texas.

He said the ban would be explained to Malaysian students involved in the movement abroad.

Dr Mahathir said it was wrong to say the ban was implemented a "bit late" as the Government required time to collate evidence.

"We want to right what is wrong as we feel that it is wrong for one man to say that Al Arqam members are the only true Mus-

lims while the remaining one billion Muslims are not.

"What is clear here is that the man has styled himself as a prophet and even claims to have the virtues of God which may mislead his followers," he said.

He said the Attorney-General would study what action would be taken against Al Arqam.

The ban, he said, did not imply that members were not allowed to wear what they were accustomed to.

He said the movement's communes would remain largely untouched unless they persisted in spreading Al Arqam's teachings.

"If they do anything wrong, we will step in," he said.

● TURN TO PAGE 3

Dr M: Movement not a political threat

● FROM PAGE ONE

Dr Mahathir said it was important that children did not grow up with the wrong perception of Islam, especially that propagated by Al Arqam.

"It is a question of faith not

based on reason. If you believe this man is going to be the Messiah, then there is no way we can tell people who are converted that he's not."

Dr Mahathir dismissed the movement as being a political

threat, saying that the people would not support it to form the Government.

He said Ashaari could join Umno, provided he subscribed to the party's beliefs.