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Mahathir-Arqam

POLICE WILL QUESTION ASHAARI IF HE RETURNS, SAYS PM

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GENTING HIGHLANDS, Aug 28 (Bernama) -- Al Arqam leader Ashaari Muhammad will be questioned by the police if he returns to Malaysia on whether he wants to continue or stop his deviationist teachings, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"If he insists on claiming he has the virtues of God and holds regular conversations with the Prophet, we will take action according to the laws of the country," the Prime Minister told reporters after viewing the 3rd Asean Show Jumping Competition at the Awana Horse Ranch here.

The Home Ministry declared Al Arqam unlawful on Friday under the Societies Act 1966 but the movement's followers appeared to be continuing with their activities.

Dr Mahathir said it would take more time to rehabilitate Al Arqam followers as it was difficult to change a person's religious belief.

The government would continue to provide information on Ashaari's deviations to his followers to make them realise their mistake and return to the true Islamic path, he added. -- more

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Mahathir-Arqam 2 (last) Genting Highlands

He said the government would also inform the public on the reasons for acting against the group so that they would not be confused by certain people.

"We don't want people to think we are suppressing a missionary group as there are already persons going to the kampungs to say the government is preventing the spread of Islamic missionary work," he said.

He said the allegation was untrue because the government only sought to curb the deviationist teachings of Ashaari.

Meanwhile in ALOR SETAR, the police this morning arrested five Al Arqam members travelling in a car which was believed to contain pamphlets and items produced by the group.

The men, aged from 25 to 40 years, were detained at a roadblock at Alor Janggus at about 3am.

Kota Setar district police chief Assistant Commissioner Bazari Yunus said the five were being held at the local police station: -- Bernama

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