

# Ashaari to be held as long as laws allow

**By Syed Abu Bakar**

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Unless he repents, Al Arqam leader Ashaari Muhammad will remain in detention as long as the country's laws allow it, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We have to follow the laws of this country," he said in response to questions as to how long Ashaari will be detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA), after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the party's headquarters.

Dr Mahathir said the detention of Ashaari and other actions against the movement were taken in the interest of the country.

"We as a responsible Government cannot allow Muslims of this country to be misled by Al Arqam."

He said the deviationist teachings of Ashaari could mislead many Muslims.

Dr Mahathir said that at first it started as a movement that followed the teachings of Islam.

"The movement's members dressed themselves in robes and wore turbans, but this is their right.

"But the movement later started to deviate when it adopted the Aurad Muhammadiyah concept.

"This was followed by the claims by Ashaari that he possessed certain powers of God and was able to communicate with Prophet Mohammed," Dr Ma-

hathir said.

"Ashaari also said that the Prophet addressed him as 'Tuan'."

The Prime Minister said the movement had also exploited women.

"Some women members were married to men members without proper registration.

He said he learnt of a case where a French woman, who had embraced Islam, was introduced to the movement and later married several times with Al Arqam members.

He said the woman later lost her mind and was warded at Hospital Permai in Johor.

Dr Mahathir also said there was evidence that Al Arqam members in Thailand were taught marching techniques.

Holding up a Thai newspaper called the *Islamic Guidance Post* which portrayed a picture of some Al Arqam members marching on its front page, he said the picture could be evidence that the movement was preparing an army in the style of the "Peperangan Badar" (Badar war) in which a small Muslim army defeated a larger non-Muslim one during Prophet Mohammed's time.

He added that the Government's action in banning the movement and detaining its leader and some members was not so much for the "security situation right now" but because of its concern for the deviationist teachings.

Dr Mahathir said al-

though "in secular countries they might not understand this", here (in Malaysia) the Government was very particular about religious issues.

Asked on the move by Ashaari to sue him, Dr Mahathir said: "He can sue me if he wants".

In Kelantan, police have detained 11 Al Arqam members for distributing pamphlets at mosques and public places in the State over the last two months.

State police chief Senior Assistant Commissioner (I) Kamarudin Hamzah said in Kota Baru they were detained under the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 and were later released on police bail of between RM2,000 and RM5,000.