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Mahathir-Arqam

MAHATHIR DISAPPOINTED WITH ASAARI FOR NOT KEEPING PROMISE

LANGKAWI, June 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is disappointed with the attitude of former al-Arqam leader Asaari Muhammad, whom he said has not kept his words.

The Prime Minister said Asaari should not have organised secret meetings with several of his former followers, and as reported, to revive the movement.

"I am disappointed that Asaari's promises are only empty words, but we will take action," he told a press conference on his two-day visit here.

Dr Mahathir, also Home Minister, said the government would continue to keep watch on the latest developments (involving former al-Arqam followers) and would act should the need arise.

"We are still not clear as to the form of action to be taken. Let's leave it open, and wait for what happens," he added.

Dr Mahathir said what Asaari had preached was a deviation from the Islamic "akidah" (belief), and this had to be rectified, to save the nation's Muslims from deviation.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayub said yesterday that Asaari had held secret meetings with several of his followers, planning to revive the banned movement.

He said based on police information, the meetings were held in Asaari's restricted residence.

In KAMPUNG GAJAH today, Megat Junid blamed the Pusat Islam and the various state Islamic Religious Affairs Departments for their failure in arranging an effective rehabilitation programme for former members of the banned movement.

Megat Junid Megat said this failure had led to the al-Arqam followers attempting to revive their movement.

Based on the statement by some of former followers that rehabilitation activities were lacking, it was clear that Pusat Islam and the State Religious Departments had failed in their efforts, he told reporters after officiating the Koperasi Bina Bersama Bhd annual meeting.

"The police can keep watch on their activities, or make arrest or detain them. But the task of rehabilitation, is in the hands of the Religious Departments of the various states," he said.

Megat Junid said he had repeatedly proposed the setting up of a permanent committee between his ministry and the Pusat Islam as part of the move to combat deviationist teachings.

Until today, the committee had not been formed, he added.

Asked whether the police would detain former al-Arqam leader Asaari Muhammad who was said to be holding ceramahs at his house, Megat Junid said the ministry was studying the ceramahs in detail.

So far, investigations had shown that the ceramahs by Asaari had not touched on teachings of the banned "Aurat Muhammadiyah", but there were inspiring elements towards the movement revival.

"I am not saying that Asaari is involved in efforts to revive the movement, and I am also not denying that many of his former followers visited him and he gave ceramahs," said Megat Junid.

Asked whether former high echelon leaders were involved in the revival efforts, Megat Junid said investigations had so far shown that none had been involved.

Megat Junid also said the four people, including a senior Immigration officer detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) last week were involved in the identity card and the work permit forgery activities. -- BERNAMA

ZAA AR AO