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Junid-Arqam

14 FORMER AL-ARQAM MEMBERS TO BE RELEASED TOMORROW

KUALA LUMPUR, 4 Feb (Bernama) -- Fourteen former members, including two women, of the banned Al-Arqam movement will be released from Kamunting detention centre in Perak tomorrow, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said this evening.

All but one would be given conditional release, he told reporters after the breaking of the fast organised by the Home Ministry at Parliament House, here. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was also present.

Megat Junid said Ahmad Salim Haji Omar, a former deputy director of the Land and Cooperative Development Department, would be released without conditions.

The two women are Tengku Noriah Tengku Abdullah and Azura Md Yusof.

The others on conditional release are Nasiruddin Mohd Ali, Mohd Fakhrudin Arrazi Abdullah, Pahrol Mohamad Juoi, Hashim Ahmad, Hashim Jaafar, Mohd Nizamuddin Asaari, Jaffar Ahmad, Hashim Mohamed, Mansor Mohd Noor, Sh Abdul Rahim Sh Ahmad and Mohamad Abu Bakar.

Megat Junid said their release showed that the government was sensitive and flexible in the implementation of the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960.

He said the government had throughout their detention been following their progress.

Their release also showed that the government, apart from matters on national security, also cared about religious matters, welfare and human rights.

"All the 14 former Al-Arqam had undergone intensive rehabilitation course prior to their release," he said.

The former Al-Arqam members have been in detention for the past six months.

Megat Junid said the government agreed to give them conditional release because some of them had regretted their past actions and wanted to rejoin the society.

They would also be required to participate in the government's programme to help rehabilitate other former members, he said.

"Some of them (to be released tomorrow) have offered to act as facilitators of courses organised by the government," he said.

Megat Junid said the government decided to release them to give them the opportunity to build a new life with their respective families.

Apart from Ahmad Salim, the others had to observe certain conditions relating to their release, he said. But he did not say what were the conditions.

The Al-Arqam movement was banned by the government on Aug 5, 1994 after the National Fatwa Council ruled that the movement's teachings of Aurad Muhamadiyah were contrary to the teachings of Islam.

But, a year later several former members tried to revive the movement and the government acted by detaining 14 of them last year.

-- BERNAMA

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