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14 former Al Arqam members held under ISA to go free today

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Home Ministry will release all 14 former Al Arqam members detained under the Internal Security Act from the Kamunting camp in Taiping, Perak, tomorrow.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said except for one, the rest would be put under restricted residence.

Ahmad Salim Omar, the former deputy director-general of the Land and Co-operative Development Ministry, would be released unconditionally, he said.

The 13 are Tengku Noriah Tengku Abdullah, Azura Md Yusof, Nasiruddin Mohd Ali, Mohd Fakhruddin Arrazi Abdullah, Pahrol Mohamad Juoi, Hashim Ahmad Hashim Jaafar, Mohd Nizamuddin Asaari, Jaafar Ahmad, Hashim Mohamed, Mansor Mohd Noor, Sheikh Abdul Rahman Sheikh Ahmad and Mohamad A. Bakar.

Mohd Nizamuddin is the son of former Al Arqam leader Asaari Muhammad.

All 14 were arrested separately after the National Fatwa Council ruled on Aug 5, 1994, that the Aurad Muhammadiyah teachings practised by members of the Al Arqam group deviated from Islam.

The movement was banned by the Home Ministry under section 5(1) of the Societies Act 1966 20 days later.

Megat Junid was speaking to reporters after the ministry's breaking of fast at the Parliament House.

Also present was Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also the Home Minister.

Megat Junid said the 14 were arrested following their attempts to revive the movement although it was banned by the Government.

He said all had been detained for more than six months.

Following consultation with Dr Mahathir and the police, it was decided the detainees should be released because they had repented, he added.

"They have also expressed their desire to return to the mainstream of society," he said.

They will be required to attend rehabilitation programmes upon their release.

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