

03 JAN 1997

Arqam-Pledge

EX AL ARQAM FOLLOWERS VOW TO DISCARD PAST ASPIRATIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 3 (Bernama) -- Some 500 residents of the Al Arqam's main settlement in Sungai Penchala, here, which was officially disbanded today, pledged to discard their past aspirations of the outlawed movement.

The residents, who were once staunch followers of the deviant religious movement, had repented and returned to the true teachings of Islam were determined to shed their Al Arqam identity.

Sungai Penchala Al Arqam movement former leader Yunus Ismail led a group of the movement's followers pledging to give up the movement's deviant teachings and revert to the true teachings of Islam.

They made their solemn pledge before Islamic Development Department Director-General Brig Jen (R) Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin at the disbandment ceremony of the settlement under a staggered programme to remodel all settlements established by the banned movement and integrate them with surrounding villages.

The 18-year-old Sungai Penchala settlement, is the first to be established by the movement founded by Asaari Muhammad.

The movement was banned in 1994 after the National Fatwa Council declared that it had deviated from the true teachings of Islam.

The movement's settlements nationwide would be disbanded in stages which was expected to be completed before the end of this year.

The settlements would be remodelled to make it appear like other villages in order to completely erase the movement's identity.

The residents, who read out the seven-point pledge, vowed to sever ties with the former leadership of the movement and also promised to abide by the decisions of the State and National Fatwa Councils as well as respect the state and federal government laws.

Speaking to reporters later, Abdul Hamid, who launched the disbandment of the settlement, said the move was agreed to by the former Al Arqam followers and was not forced by the government.

He said the movement's settlements in Gong Kulim, Kelantan, Kampung Sempadan, Pahang and Kampung Batu Hampar, Perak, would also be disbanded.

The settlements would be converted into community activity centres to enable the followers to interact with the locals.

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said there were no reports of Al Arqam followers after the government took the necessary steps to rehabilitate them.

In fact, more and more of them came forward offering themselves to be rehabilitated and return to the true Islamic faith, he told reporters after attending a discussion between Saudi Arabia's Minister of Pilgrimage Dr Mahmud Mohamad Safar and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Prime Minister's Department here today. -- BERNAMA

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