

Al-Arqam still active under different guises

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By Hariz Mohd

KUALA LUMPUR: Al-Arqam, the banned religious movement, is still active, with more than 5,000 members throughout the country and operating under different names. Currently led by its late founder Ashaari Muhammad's wife, Khadijah Aam, authorities believe its members are still aggressive in spreading the movement's aurad muhammadiyah doctrine.

The doctrine was declared a deviant by the Federal Government in 1994, leading to the ban.

Jakim director-general Othman Mustapha said its members and their activities were being monitored not only by Jakim but also the state religious departments and other enforcement agencies.

"Although they are trying to evade detection by changing the name several times, we know for a fact that the movement is still very much alive. It is the same Al-Arqam."

He said the group was first found trying to revive the movement under the name Rufaqa but later changed it after they were detected by the authorities.

"When Al-Arqam was banned, they had about 10,000 members nationwide and we had to spend a substantial amount of money to bring them back to the true teachings of Islam.

"We held continuous programmes for them, with the help of state religious departments," he told the New Straits Times yesterday.

"However, there is still a large number of them who are still adamant and continue to practise its teachings. They have been found to be very active in recruiting new members and spreading the doctrine.

"From information gathered, we found that they now have at least 5,000 active members nationwide and the latest, we found that they have registered the movement as Global Ikhwan Sdn Bhd.

"Despite all the different names, they are still the very same Al-Arqam."

Othman said initial investigations showed that its members were detected in almost all the states, including Selangor.

"Since Al-Arqam's ban, religious authorities have been keeping surveillance on its ex-members' activities to ensure that the group is not revived.

"Once we gather all the proof and confirmation, we will move in," he said.

Al-Arqam was one of the biggest Islamic non-government organisations in the 1990s.

Its members were active in spreading the doctrine through religious activities until they were declared a deviant group by the National Fatwa Council.

Ashaari had claimed that he was a prophet and predicted that he would be the prime minister after former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

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