

## Al-Arqam's teachings non-Islamic: Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, June 17: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad said today the Al-Arqam Islamic Movement is a security threat to Muslim Malaysia and action would be taken to stop it from spreading its ideology, reports Reuter.

"Al-Arqam is teaching a re-

ligion that is not Islam. We have to take action before their deviationist teaching spreads," he said, answering reporters' questions after opening an Islamic civilisation festival in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.

Vernacular newspapers quoted Malaysia's Islamic Centre as saying that the banned Al-Arqam has about 100 armed militants among its 100,000 followers in the country.

However, the movements leaders have denied the allegations and called for a dialogue with the government to solve the matter.

Al-Arqam claims that their leader Ashaari Muhammad is the long-awaited Imam Mahadi or messiah. He is in hiding overseas. Al-Arqam used to say that they wanted to rule the country but have kept low since 1991 when the government banned them.

Mahathir Mohammad

## BRIEFLY

### 3 Zulu miners killed in S Africa:

Three Zulu mine workers were killed and several wounded on Thursday night when fighting erupted at a migrant workers' hostel east of Johannesburg, a mine spokesman said yesterday. Reuter reports from Johannesburg.

He said Zulu workers of the East Rand Proprietary Mines Ltd returning to work after special leave were attacked by unidentified employees. No further details were immediately available.

Violence broke out at 9pm last night and claimed the lives of three. Several were injured.

### Chinese flood toll rises to 129:

At least 129 people have died in the floods which have ravaged southern China for the past week, according to an early toll reported by The China Daily Friday. AFP reports from Beijing.

Seventy people lost their lives when typhoon Russ hit Guangdong and Guangxi provinces in the south of the country on June 7 and 8 while at least 40 others were swept away in flash floods, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, quoted by the paper said.

Other provinces in the south and southeast of China were also affected by flooding, especially Jiangxi where at least 19 died, several hundred thousands homes in the region were destroyed.

### Thai minor girl held with drugs:

Thai anti-drugs police yesterday detained an eight-year-old girl after finding heroin hidden in her underpants, Reuter reports from Bangkok.

They decided to search the child while looking for her parents on a drugs-related matter in Samut Prakan 25 km (15 miles) south of Bangkok. Police said they found 14 small bottles filled with heroin.

The child will be charged with being a heroin courier. It was likely the juvenile court would send her to a reform school, police said.

### Haiti dumps drugs into sea:

The Haitian military, which faces allegations of involvement in drug trafficking, dumped 590 pounds (268 kg) of cocaine into the sea Thursday to draw attention to its anti-narcotics programme. Reuter reports from Port-Au-Prince.

Witnesses said the cocaine and 75 pounds (34 kg) of marijuana were thrown into the sea just off the coast of Port-Au-Prince by soldiers carrying automatic rifles.

US drug agents have said there is circumstantial evidence to support drug trafficking allegations against the military chiefs who deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in a 1991 coup but say they lack hard evidence to indict them.

## 3 to vie for Britain's Labour leadership

LONDON, June 17: Acting leader Margaret Beckett and two challengers, Tony Blair and John Prescott, will vie for the leadership of Britain's opposition Labour Party, the party announced Thursday, reports AFP.

The three were nominated by Labour MPs as candidates succeed John Smith, who died of a heart attack last month.

All three received the mandatory minimum of 34 nominations to stand. However, another would be candidate, former secretary of state to the treasury, Denis Davies, received only seven nominations.

Tony Blair, the shadow home secretary and widely seen as a "moderniser" on the right of the party, was strong

favourite to accede to the leadership. He obtained a total of 154 nominations.

Beckett, who has led the Party in an interim capacity since Smith's death, and Prescott, shadow employment secretary, were nominated by 42 and 46 Labour MPs respectively.

Regarded as traditional left-wingers, they are also standing for the deputy leadership, and received 106 and 101 nominations respectively for that post.

The winner of the leadership contest will not be known until July 21 following a complex procedure involving additional votes by unions and party members in the constituencies.

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Clinton said today it was examining apparently conciliatory signals from North Korea and ex-

pected back to them on Thursday on his meeting with Kim. He is due to meet with the North Korean President again Friday.

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