

Arroyo won't meet Wan Azizah without Mahathir's okay

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said today she will refuse to meet with the wife of Malaysia's jailed former deputy premier Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, unless with approval of the Malaysian government.

She said she would clear first with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's office any request by Opposition leader Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail to meet with her.

Arroyo's position on Anwar is a marked difference from that of her predecessor Joseph Estrada, who angered Kuala Lumpur

with his support for Anwar and who had met Wan Azizah several times in Kuala Lumpur and Manila for discussions on Anwar.

"If ever a similar thing would happen, I would always notify the office of the prime minister and find out their action," she told reporters before leaving for home after a three-day state visit to Malaysia.

"If he gave so much as a hint he would not be happy, I would not go through with it," she said.

Arroyo, who said her Malaysian visit had set bilateral relations "back to what they should be," has been unstinting in her praise for Mahathir.