

PM: Malaysia not a haven for terrorists

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PUTRAJAYA: The Government will not allow the country to become a hiding place for any terrorist outfit or its leaders.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this firm stand covers Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari as well.

The Prime Minister said Kuala Lumpur once extended help to Misuari and the MNLF to find an amicable solution to their problems with Manila.

"But, that was then. The problem had been solved.

"But when he was appointed governor (of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao) Misuari shirked his responsibilities.

"He did not do what he was supposed to as a leader by bringing development to the region. Instead, he spent more time overseas and in Manila than in bringing progress and

development to the people.

"So, we no longer feel obliged to help him and the MNLF," he told reporters after launching the WorldSpace Digital Audio Broadcasting Service here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who was speaking before Misuari's arrest was announced by the Inspector-General of Police yesterday, said Misuari and the MNLF's struggle was not altruistic and was not a fight for independence.

"After we had helped them smooth things over with the Philippine government, they once again tried to create unrest in the region.

"This clearly shows that their struggle and their focus are not in tune with that of the majority," he added.

Asked if Malaysia concurred with Manila's definition of Misuari as a terrorist, Dr Mahathir said that was the Philippines' internal issue and Kuala Lumpur did not wish to be involved.

"But what is clear is that we will not offer any help or political asylum to him and

others like him.

"We will not have Malaysia becoming a hiding place for terrorists," he said.

Commenting on reports that Philippine President Gloria Arroyo had sought his help in ending a new Muslim revolt in the country's southern region, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would remain true to its pledge to co-operate with the world to fight terrorism.

He said that while it was true that Kuala Lumpur had once been involved in helping Misuari and MNLF to find an accord with Manila, Malaysia would not be dragged into the problem again nor offer refuge to MNLF members.

"We helped them find peace once so there is no reason for them to resort to violence," he said.

According to reports on Monday, Misuari declared war on the government, a week before an election to elect a new governor for the region.

He launched several well-coordinated attacks on military outposts on Jolo Island on Thursday morning.