

PM: No obligation to help Misuari

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Malaysia not prepared to give political asylum to rebels

By **Husna Yusop**

PUTRAJAYA. Sat: Malaysia is not obliged to help Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Malaysia will hold on to its promise to cooperate with all countries in the world in the effort to curb terrorist activities.

"We are not going to be a place for any terrorists to hide themselves. This is not the question of fighting for

independence or the likes.

"Before this, we helped Misuari to find a solution with the Philippines government. Unfortunately, after he was given a position as governor, he did not do much to benefit the people in southern Philippines.

"Therefore, we no longer feel obliged to help him," he told reporters when asked whether the Malaysian government is prepared to give political asylum to Misuari.

He said the government had already provided as much assistance as it could for the people in the south-

ern Philippines to obtain autonomy for the region.

"Autonomy has been accorded but unfortunately when in power, they did not use their power for the development of the region."

Yesterday, Philippine president Gloria Arroyo said Manila wants Malaysia and Jakarta to help end a fresh Filipino Muslim revolt in the southern Philippines.

Mahathir said by starting another revolt, it shows that Misuari does not think like the common people of southern Philippines.

Asked whether Malaysia follows the Philippine government's stand against Misuari, he said: "This is an internal matter. We should not interfere by giving protection to rebels from other countries."

On attempts by several parties to present Malaysia and Misuari as good friends, Mahathir said what Malaysia has done before was to help them bring peace to the region.

"This we have done ... now we don't have any obligation to interfere in this," he said.