

# We cannot retain Misuari, says Dr M

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'KL can only hold him for a month for illegal entry'

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**KUALA LUMPUR**, Tues: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government has the right to hold Nur Misuari here for only a month and so he must be sent somewhere soon.

"If we have to send him to a third country we may, because we can't retain him here. We can send him to Manila anytime they want.

"But, the fact is, he didn't do anything wrong here except for entering illegally and we have the right to hold him only for a month. After that we have to release him," he told

reporters at the Federal Territory mosque today.

Mahathir said the government can't be expected to release Misuari here, because "he has no papers at all".

"If other people (a third

country) want, we will send him there," he added.

He was responding to a statement by a Philippine senator today who said that Malaysia will be committing an unfriendly act if it sends Misuari to a third country.

"Any country that will releases him or provides him asylum should be considered as committing an unfriendly act towards the government of the Philippines," said Rodolfo Biazon, vice-chairman of the senate committee on defence.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday if the Philippines does not want Misuari, then Malaysia will send him to a country that accepts him.

Misuari, who broke a peace treaty with the government late last month, has reportedly filed for asylum through his New York-based lawyer. He is being held by Malaysia after entering the country illegally.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak also said that Misuari will be sent to a third country if the Philippines is not prepared to take him back.

"We hope that the arrest of Misuari will not bring any burden to the country," the minister said, after officiating Pernama's 2002 Calendar Presentation Ceremony at Mindef today, adding that Malaysia wanted to hand him over as soon as possible.

Philippine President

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said Manila is ready to take back Misuari, according to a Bernama report today.

She said she does not want Misuari to be a burden to Malaysia and in fact plans have been made to bring him back to face charges.

The Philippine president said this in TV3 station's *In Conversation* programme, telecast here this evening.

She was interviewed by TV3 news and current affairs senior general manager Datuk Chamil Wariya, ABS-CBN Manila chief correspondent Korina Sanchez, RCTI of Indonesia executive news producer Roy Tindage and iTV foreign editor Chib Jitniyom.