

# Immigration dept may extend ex-governor's stay

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By **R.S. Kumar**

**PETALING JAYA, Fri:** The status of Nur Misuari, former governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, remains unclear as the 30-day detention period comes to an end.

The Immigration Department, which is caught in the middle of the "tussle" between Kuala Lumpur and Manila, is set to extend Misuari's stay.

A department official, who declined to be named, said the former separatist leader can be detained indefinitely under section 34(1) of the Immigration Act.

The section states that any person ordered to be removed from Malaysia may be detained further for the purpose of making arrangements for his removal.

"We are waiting for further instructions from the Home

Ministry. We have to hang on," said the official.

The Philippine ambassador to Malaysia, Jose Brillantes, said his government is in the process of winding up discussions on the deportation exercise.

"The authorities should be allowed to perform their work without any interference," he said.

Brillantes declined to say whether the deportation process is being hastened by Manila as the Dec 24 deadline approaches.

He also refused to comment on a report quoting Philippines national security adviser Roilo Golez as saying that Misuari may have to go to Libya to end the impasse over his detention in Malaysia.

"I have no idea about this. You have to verify this with him," said Brillantes.

The Libyan embassy also refused to comment when asked about diplomatic arrangements pertaining to Misuari seeking asylum.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia will not renege on its undertaking to deport Misuari.

Nevertheless, he said, the government is prepared to consider Misuari's request for political asylum, reportedly sent to Kuala Lumpur by his lawyer, Elly Pamatong.

"We shall study it. We have given our undertaking to detain and deport any person involved in terrorism who enters our country. That is our promise. We cannot renege on that promise," Mahathir said.

Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Kuala Lumpur declined to comment on whether it has received any such request from Misuari.

"In principle, we will not disclose any information regarding individual claims. The case is of a sensitive nature," said a spokesman.