

# Misuari. to remain till mid-January

Ministry confirms report on tentative date

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**PETALING JAYA**, Sat: Malaysia has decided on a tentative date in mid-January to send Nur Misuari back to the Philippines.

Foreign Ministry secretary-general Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak today confirmed reports quoting Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Syed Albar as saying that Misuari may remain in Malaysia until the middle of next month.

"As what was said by the minister, in mid-January or some time next month, that is the tentative date as for now," Ahmad Fuzi told AFP.

Syed Hamid said late yesterday that Manila was currently unable to take custody of Misuari for security reasons. He stressed that Malaysia was eager to deport the rebel leader and was only holding him on behalf of the Philippines.

"We still hold on to the understanding that he must be deported as soon as pos-

sible ... the sooner, the better, because we do not want to be in limbo.

"The timing for his deportation is just an administrative matter," the foreign minister said after returning from a meeting in Manila to discuss Misuari's fate.

Meanwhile in **KUALA LUMPUR**, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said police have completed their investigation on Misuari and a report on the probe has been handed over to the government.

The police are ready to send him back to the Philippines if there is an order by the government to do so, Norian said, when attending the Hari Raya open house of Kuala Lumpur police chief Datuk Syed Abdul Rahman Syed Abdul Kadir here today.

He said police are in constant communication with the Philippine embassy

here should there be a directive to deport Misuari.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had earlier said Malaysia is holding Misuari for only a month as the government has no reason to detain him.

Misuari was arrested on Nov 24 for entering the country illegally through Jampiras Island off Sandakan in Sabah, after fleeing the Philippines.

He is wanted by the Philippine government for declaring war against it.

Meanwhile, an associate of Misuari today called for an emergency meeting of Islamic countries to decide the former governor's fate.

Philippine President Gloria Arroyo yesterday rejected an appeal from the Organisation of Islamic Conference for Misuari to be given sanctuary in a third country and instead vowed to put him on trial for rebellion.