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`Misuari may be sent to another country'

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PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - Renegade Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari may be sent to another country if the Philippines was still not ready to take him back, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said this would be studied in the light of Manila's delay in setting a deadline for his deportation.

Misuari, arrested near Sandakan on Nov 24, faces a charge of rebellion for allegedly instigating a revolt in the southern Philippines.

"It is a possibility that we will discuss thoroughly.

"However, we won't force anyone to take him," Abdullah said, adding that he knew of no other country at this time which would accept the former governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindananao.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, reiterated Malaysia's readiness to deport Misuari, as stated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Friday.

"What the PM said that day ... that remains our stand," Abdullah told reporters after attending the Home Ministry monthly assembly.

"Since President Arroyo has said that they will take him back, then they should quickly do so."

Malaysia was still waiting for "green light" from the Philippines to deport Misuari, 61. He was being detained at an undisclosed location for illegally entering the country.

Meanwhile, in Manila, AFP reports that the Philippines says it was ready to take custody of Misuari.

"There is no problem with that and we are ready to take him back," Arroyo's national security adviser Roilo Golez said over DZRH radio in Manila.

"We just wanted to make sure that Malaysia finishes its investigation before we talk."

Yesterday, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said Misuari could be held here for 30 days under the law.

He said police investigations had found no link between Nur Misuari and the Abu Sayyaf kidnappings in Sabah last year and the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia.

On Dec 5, Abdullah said the delay in deporting Misuari was due to the Philippines government's "hesitancy".

On Dec 7, Arroyo in Manila said the country would "be ready for Misuari upon a mutually-agreed-upon period".

Misuari has filed a petition with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees seeking asylum. His lawyer, Elly Pamatong, was quoted as saying that it was now for the UNHCR to find a country which will take Misuari.

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