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Arroyo-Misuari

MANILA PREPARED TO TAKE BACK MISUARI, SAYS PRESIDENT ARROYO

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 11 (Bernama) -- Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said Manila is ready to take back its Muslim leader Nur Misuari who had entered Malaysia illegally.

She said she did not want Misuari to be a burden to Malaysia and in fact plans had been made to bring him back where he would be placed in confinement and charged.

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

The programme was recorded on Dec 7 at the Malacanang Palace in Manila.

Asked whether Misuari would be deported to a third country, Arroyo said: "I would rather get him back to the Philippines after Malaysia has finished interrogating him."

She said the Philippines recognised Malaysia's right to question Misuari for violating Malaysian laws and would be willing to accept Misuari once Kuala Lumpur finished its investigations.

"Now of course, if Malaysia feels that it is better to take him away, we are ready to take him back to the Philippines after Malaysia has finished its investigation," she said.

On what had been keeping Manila from taking back Misuari, Arroyo said they wanted to stabilise the situation in southern Philippines and was grateful to Malaysia for respecting their time-table.

"I don't want Misuari to come back like a conquering hero," she said.

Misuari, the leader of the Moro National Liberation Front, was arrested near Sandakan, Sabah, on Nov 24 and faces charges of rebellion for allegedly instigating a revolt in the southern Philippines.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said today that Malaysia would be holding Misuari only for a month and might send him to a third country if the Philippines did not want him back.

"We have no reason to retain him here. We will send him back to Manila anytime they want to take him back," Dr Mahathir had said.

In the hour-long interview, Arroyo, who took office from disposed president Joseph Estrada 12 months ago, also spoke about her plans to fight terrorism and poverty within the decade.

She said her goal was to be able to win against poverty, which intertwines with terrorism, within a decade and to create job opportunities for the people.

Since coming to office, Arroyo said she had conducted reforms in financial sector including formulating money laundering law, rehabilitating the Philippines National Bank and land reforms.

-- BERNAMA

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