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Mahathir-Misuari

MISUARI CAUSES SOURING OF M'SIA'S TIES WITH NEIGHBOURS, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 6 (Bernama) -- Disgraced Moro leader Nur Misuari who fled to this country after launching a rebellion against the Philippine government last month has put Malaysia in a spot as his action could affect Malaysia's ties with its neighbours, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said,

"Misuari puts Malaysia in a spot. Why can't he run away somewhere else. Each time he creates trouble back home he flees to Malaysia ...and it sours up relation with our neighbours," Dr Mahathir said.

Speaking to reporters at Parliament House lobby after tabling the 2002 Supply Bill at the Dewan Negara here today, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was ready to deport Nur Misuari but Manila must accept him back.

He was asked when would Nur Misuari's repatriation actually take place.

"There is no point in us deporting him and later he is let free just like that. We shall discuss his deportation with the Philippines," he said.

Persuaded further to reveal the date for Nur Misuari's deportation, Dr Mahathir said the matter was being discussed.

To a reporter's question suggesting that Manila appeared not keen in taking Nur Misuari back, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would have to think of other ways, if for whatever reason, Manila refused to accept him.

Asked on the possibility of Malaysia freeing Nur Misuari, the prime minister replied: "We hope not. Or else people may say we are collaborating with terrorists."

He also said that in custody Nur Misuari did not make any request.

Nur Misuari and six followers were arrested on Nov 24 for trying to enter Malaysia illegally through Pulau Jampiras, the island closest to the boundary with the Philippines which is only 30 minutes boat ride from Sandakan on Sabah's east coast.

Three days earlier, Misuari, the former governor of the Muslim Mindanao autonomous region, declared war against the Philippine government after being barred from contesting in the election for the governorship.

"Only that when we first detained him we questioned him about the rebellion in the Philippines and whether or not he was behind the kidnapping in Sipadan," he said referring to last year's abduction of Malaysians and foreigners from the resort island off Sabah by gunmen from the Abu Sayyaf Muslim separatist group.

Dr Mahathir was also asked whether Malaysia can release Nur Misuari or send him away to a third country.

"In this kind of situation, I don't know. I can't anticipate that," he said emphasising that the matter needed careful study because of the implications on the government.

"We have to be very careful in dealing with this (issue)," Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

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