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Mahathir-Misuari

MISUARI TO THIRD COUNTRY IF THE PHILIPPINES DOES NOT TAKE HIM, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia will send the former governor of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao, Nur Misuari, to a third country if the Philippine government does not take him back.

"If they don't take him back, we have no right to detain him here because he has not broken any Malaysian law or done anything wrong here," the prime minister said.

He said the only "crime" committed by Misuari was to enter the country without any valid travel documents and so the deposed Muslim leader did not have a place in Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters at his Hari Raya Open House in Seri Perdana, here.

Misuari, along with six others, were detained on Pulau Jampiras, Sabah, on Nov 24 for entering the country illegally from Jolo in the southern Philippines after being accused of heading an armed rebellion against Manila and declaring war on the Philippine government.

The Malaysian government had, from the outset of his arrest, expressed its willingness to deport Misuari back to the Philippines but had yet to get the approval of its Asean partner.

Under Malaysia's immigration laws, Misuari can be held for up to 30 days and the period expires on Dec 24.

Last week, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said Manila would send the Presidential Advisor on Special Concern, Norberto Gonzalez, to Malaysia to discuss the matter with the government.

"I have not met him, I will meet if he wants to see me," Dr Mahathir said when asked if he had met the envoy.

He said Malaysia was not planning any action against Misuari for the time being but "I have to see the special envoy first, we want to know what they (the Philippines) want, I have not met him so I cannot say anything."

On the video tape of Osama bin Laden, released by the United States government last week, "confessing" to masterminding the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the US, Dr Mahathir said he had yet to see the tape.

"I have not seen it so I cannot pass judgment on it...it may be true, it may not be true...so I think it is up to the people who are going to charge him whether they accept it or not," he said.

Various parties, mostly the Arab nations, had said that the tape could have been doctored as the audio was not clear and Osama's voice were inaudible in some parts of the tape.

These remarks had come under rebuke by the US, including President George W. Bush, who said that the tape was genuine and solid proof that Osama was behind the attacks which killed more than 5,000 people.

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