

26/12/2001

Misuari's family here in bid to meet him

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The family of renegade former Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao Governor and Moro National Liberation Front head Nur Misuari arrived in Malaysia today for a possible reunion.

Lawyer Elly Pamatong, who claims to represent Misuari, said he was confident that a meeting between his client and family would be allowed.

"I have faith that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would approve the family reunion and I am just waiting for the authorities to contact me," he said.

Pamatong added that Misuari's wife, Tarhata, and their children wanted to meet him during this festive period.

He also said that Malaysia should press the Philippines to allow the 60-year-old Misuari to go to a third country.

It is also understood that the 26-year-old Tarhata wanted the lawyer to be present during her meeting with her husband.

Pamatong claimed that he was like an elder brother to Tarhata. "She and the children will only meet Misuari if I join them," he said.

It was reported yesterday that the Government would consider allowing Misuari's family to visit him.

But Dr Mahathir had reiterated that he expected the Philippine Government to take custody of Misuari as Malaysia could not hold him forever.

The Prime Minister also said that Malaysia could not entertain political asylum for Misuari as it had given an undertaking that people who carried out terror attacks in their country and took ordinary people as hostages could not be given asylum.

Meanwhile, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai told the New Straits Times today that police had not received any official request from Misuari's family to visit him.

"If his family members want to visit him, they can make an official request to the Federal police headquarters in Bukit Aman and we will consider it," he said.

"If they are unsure as to how to go about it, they can always ask Misuari's lawyer (Pamatong) to file the request."

Misuari was arrested while trying to enter Malaysia illegally on Nov 24 amid a Philippine military manhunt for him following a deadly attack by his followers on an army camp in Jolo. About 100 people died in the attack.

He has since been detained at an undisclosed high security area in the country under the Immigration Act, which allows the authorities to detain Misuari for 30 days.

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