

24 NOV 2001

Mahathir-Nur Misuari

M'SIA NOT PREPARED TO GRANT POLITICAL ASYLUM TO NUR MISUARI, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia is not prepared to grant political asylum to former Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Governor Nur Misuari or his group.

"This is an internal matter of the Philippines and Malaysia should not interfere by providing refuge to rebels from other countries," he told reporters after launching Asiaspace dot com, a company authorised to provide access to the "Worldspace System" in Malaysia.

"Worldspace System" is a satellite digital audio broadcast service.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia could not be the place for them to seek refuge as the government had already provided as much assistance as it could for the people in Southern Philippines to obtain autonomy for the region.

"Autonomy has been accorded but unfortunately when in power, they did not use their power for the development of the Southern Philippine region. Instead, we find its leaders like Misuari were seldom in the Southern Philippines.

"They were more often outside the country or in Manila," he said.

He also said that Malaysia had not seen any efforts being made by leaders in the Southern Philippines to fulfil their promises to the people there.

Malaysia, he said, previously assisted Misuari in seeking a solution with the Philippine Government but unfortunately when he was appointed governor, it could be seen that not much had been done for the benefit of the people in Southern Philippines.

"So therefore, we no longer feel responsible to provide him any assistance," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that after Malaysia had provided assistance to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in resolving the problem in Southern Philippines, Misuari has now launched a rebellion which showed that he was not in tune with many of the people there.

Misuari, a former separatist guerilla leader, launched a rebellion last week following President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's support for a rival MNLF faction in Monday's elections.

-- BERNAMA

SR MFJ RM