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## Move to stop Misuari's deportation

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - A man claiming to be a close associate of Nur Misuari has made a last ditch attempt to prevent the renegade Philippine leader from being deported.

Sultan Elly Velez Lao Pamatong, 58, today sent an official letter to the United States embassy here seeking political asylum and political protection for Misuari from Washington, and said that he had sent similar letters to other embassies.

Speaking to the New Straits Times at his hotel this evening, Pamatong said he felt obliged to help "a close friend whom I followed around all over Mindanao".

The California-based attorney said he had been the Moro National Liberation Front's "deputy Foreign Minister" and the movement's representative to the United Nations in the past.

"I am doing this solely on humanitarian grounds. I do not know if Misuari knows what I am doing for him but nonetheless, I hope his custodians will inform him," he said.

Pamatong said he last contacted Misuari in Sulu two days before the Nov 19 revolt where his followers launched attacks on Philippine military bases in Jolo island to stop the gubernatorial elections.

Misuari was arrested together with six MNLF followers on Jampiras Island, Sandakan on Nov 24. He faces rebellion and sedition charges in the Philippines, but Manila has made it clear that it is in no hurry to have the former Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao back home.

In letters sent today to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Immigration Department and the Foreign Ministry, he also urged Malaysia to:

- \* give temporary political protection while the UN processes Misuari's application for political asylum; or
- \* allow him to be turned over to the custody of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference; or
- \* be allowed to proceed to a third country.

Pamatong said Malaysia would no longer be bound to deport his client within 30 days with the petition for Temporary Political Asylum which he had submitted to the Malaysian authorities.

The petition comes days before the former Governor of Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is scheduled to be deported.

The Malaysian government can only hold him until Dec 24 (30 days after his arrest), as provided for under the Immigration Act.

Pamatong said he had also sent petitions for political asylum for Misuari to 15 Islamic countries.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Misuari would be sent to a third country if Manila was reluctant to have him back.

Asked if the US would accept Misuari, Pamatong said, "One hundred per cent ... it is a question of making the US understand that Misuari is, in fact, anti-terrorist and a believer in freedom for his people.

"The Philippines Government has been trying its best to twist the truth and mislead the world that he is a terrorist."