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No link to Abu Sayyaf, KMM

P. Chandra Sagar

IPOH, Sun. - Renegade Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari, who is being detained in Malaysia, was not directly involved in the series of kidnappings by the Abu Sayyaf group in Sabah last year.

He is also not directly involved with the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said the police had no direct evidence that could link Misuari, the former Governor of the Southern Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, to the Abu Sayyaf or the KMM.

The Abu Sayyaf last year kidnapped more than a dozen local and foreign tourists from the Sipadan and Pandanan islands. The hostages have all since been released after Manila waged a war against the group.

Norian also said Misuari could be detained in Malaysia for 30 days under the Immigration Act as the authorities were still carrying out investigations.

"We detained him for entering the country without official documents under Immigration laws and under normal circumstances, he can be detained for a month."

He was speaking after breaking fast with policemen at the Perak police headquarters building here last night.

Also present were Raja di-Hilir Perak Raja Jaafar Raja Muda Musa, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali and Perak Police Chief Datuk Amiruddin Embi.

Norian said this in response to queries as to why Misuari was not deported after his arrest together with six MNLF followers on Jampiras Island, Sandakan, on Nov 24.

Manila filed charges of rebellion against Misuari last month after hundreds of his followers attacked military posts on the southern Jolo Island in a failed uprising.

Misuari had also renewed his demand for independence for the country's five million Muslim minority and would seek the help of the United Nations to achieve his goal. He boycotted the Nov 26 election called by Manila to elect a new governor of the autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao.

Norian said Misuari would be deported as soon as possible as stated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Asked what would happen if Manila refused to take him, he said: "I have not thought about that because the Philippine Government wants him back."

Norian said Misuari did not indicate he would be seeking political asylum elsewhere.

However, a news report from Manila on Friday stated that Misuari had filed a petition with the offices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the United States and in Geneva seeking asylum.

His lawyer, Elly Pamatong, who filed the petition on his behalf last week, was quoted as saying: "When you file a petition for asylum through the UNHCR, it is the burden of UNHCR to look for a country that will welcome him or where he can be resettled."

chand@nstp.com.my

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