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PM: Misuari may be sent to third country if Manila doesn't want him

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Ousted Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari cannot be held in Malaysia indefinitely and may have to be sent to a willing third country if the Philippines did not want to accept him.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that no third country, including Saudi Arabia, had indicated that it would accept Misuari.

He said if there was such an indication from any country, Misuari could be deported there.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would deport Misuari immediately to the Philippines if it wanted him back.

He said Malaysia could not hold him for more than 30 days.

The Prime Minister said this was because he had not committed any offence in Malaysia but had merely been detained for illegal entry into the country, and he would have to be released after that period.

Dr Mahathir said Misuari could not simply be released to go anywhere he pleased, especially as he did not even have valid travel documents.

He added that he did not know why Manila appeared reluctant to accept Misuari who was once the governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after presenting festive gifts to the poor of the Federal Territory and Selangor at the FT Mosque.

Yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that deporting Misuari to a third country was an option being considered.

Misuari is still in Malaysian custody after he was caught entering the country illegally on Nov 24.

The Philippines appeared hesitant to accept Misuari.

A Philippine senator later expressed dissatisfaction with this stand as it would be equivalent to giving him asylum. Senator Rodolfo Biazon had reportedly said Misuari should be brought back to the Philippines to face charges.

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