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Arroyo-Mahathir

ARROYO SAYS MAHATHIR ENCOURAGED HER TO RUN IN 2004 ELECTION

MANILA, June 6 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has reportedly encouraged President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to run in next May's Philippine presidential elections.

Dr Mahathir's encouragement was relayed during his talks with Arroyo at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo where both were speakers at the international conference on the future of Asia.

A local newspaper, in its Tokyo-dated report today, quoted Arroyo's close aides as saying that Dr Mahathir asked her to stay beyond 2004 to resolve the secessionist conflict in Mindanao.

Arroyo is serving the unexpired four of the six-year term of ousted president Joseph Estrada which ends in June next year.

In a stunning announcement last December, she declared she would not run in the May 10, 2004 presidential polls and that she would focus her remaining months in office on addressing the country's political and economic problems.

US President George W. Bush has also asked Arroyo to reconsider her decision during her state visit to Washington late last month.

"Women politicians are entitled to change their mind," reports quoted Bush as telling her.

South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun echoed a similar appeal during Arroyo's official visit to Seoul early this week.

-- BERNAMA

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