

Misuari advocates radical change in electoral system

PETALING JAYA, Thurs. — Hardly three months after becoming Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Nur Misuari is emerging as the chief advocate for an overhaul of the Philippine electoral system which, he says, is putting poor regions like Mindanao at a great disadvantage.

Misuari said although the Philippines prided itself for practising the American political system, there was a serious flaw in the one practised in Manila.

While American senators are elected from each state, it is not so in the Philippines where the election of senators is held at national level.

"This means that if you want to run for the Senate, you have to travel all over the country which only the rich candidates can afford to do.

"I would like to demand for a dramatic change in the electoral system. Although we have 24 senators, not one is from Mindanao," said Misuari at a luncheon talk at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations today.

He said 19 of the senators were from Luzon and five from Visayas regions.

"I have become the chief advocate for a change in

the electoral system based on the US system which ensures equitable and proportionate representation," he added.

According to Misuari, he has received support from senators and congressmen for his proposal.

He had proposed that Mindanao be represented by a senator in each of its 24 provinces.

Misuari said he had been assured by influential Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, a former Defence Minister, of support for the constitutional change but Enrile had advocated that the country be represented by three senators for each of the six regions.

He said following the Sept 2 peace accord, which ended 25 years of armed conflict in Mindanao, the region should be properly represented in all segments of the government.

Misuari said the Philippine constitution itself was in for a change with a popular campaign now to extend the term of the President beyond six years.

On the other hand, Misuari said his proposal had caused "jitters and jealousy" among politicians in Manila, with some accusing him of behaving like the head of government. — Bernama