

29 NOV 1996
Asean-Meeting
ALL SET FOR ASEAN INFORMAL SUMMIT

JAKARTA, Nov 29 (Bernama) -- Asean leaders will begin arriving here for their first-ever informal summit tomorrow when there will be a relaxed atmosphere and free-wheeling discussion.

Despite the casual mood, the one-day meeting with no set agenda, will deliberate on key issues such as Myanmar's entry into Asean.

Myanmar submitted its application for membership last August and was prepared to join the seven-member grouping together with Cambodia and Laos next year.

The head of Myanmar's ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) Senior General Than Shwe said upon arrival here yesterday that his visit "reaffirmed the sincere desire of the government and people of Myanmar to integrate themselves into Asean".

Apart from Myanmar, the meeting may touch on the Southeast Asian nuclear weapons' free zone treaty, the South China Sea, economic cooperation in the Mekong Basin, the common Asean time zone and next month's World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Singapore.

Amidst a relaxed setting at the Lotus Room of the Jakarta Hilton, the Asean leaders will exchange views among themselves over coffee before meeting leaders of the three incoming-members.

While the Asean leaders talk in the morning, their counterparts from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar will visit the Asean Secretariat. They will later join Asean leaders for lunch and continue discussions over tea in the afternoon.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to arrive here tonight.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Malaysian Ambassador to Indonesia Datuk Zainal Abidin Alias will be in the 22-member Malaysian delegation.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to hold a press conference at the end of the informal summit before leaving for home.

Thailand, which held its elections recently, will be represented by Deputy Prime Minister Amnuay Virawan. -- BERNAMA

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