

27 NOV 1996

Asean-Preparation (With pix)

BATIK ATTIRE FOR FREE-WHEELING ASEAN SUMMIT

JAKARTA, Nov 27 (Bernama) -- President Suharto made a brief tour of the Jakarta Hilton today as the sprawling hotel gears up for the Asean informal summit on Saturday.

Officials showed the president around as the beat of "gamelan" music filled the hotel lobby.

Outside the hotel were parked about 200 cars, including the Rolls Royce Bentley, which will be used by leaders of the other Asean countries and their delegation members.

According to an Indonesian Foreign Ministry official, the leaders will don batik shirts, reflecting the "free-wheeling" atmosphere of the one-day summit.

The official said there was no confirmation yet whether Thai prime minister-elect Chavalit Yongchaiyudh would be in Jakarta for what could be his first official overseas duty.

"We are waiting for confirmation from the Thai side," he said.

The summit would be conducted in two sessions, each lasting two hours. The Asean leaders will meet among themselves in the morning before holding discussions with the leaders of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, which have applied to join the grouping, in the afternoon.

The gathering comes less than a week after the Asean leaders, with the exception of Vietnam, met at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) meeting at Subic Bay in the Philippines. Hanoi is expected to join Apec in 1998.

When Indonesia hosted the second Apec meeting in Bogor two years, the leaders were provided with specially designed batik shirts.

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

Malaysian officials view the summit as important since Kuala Lumpur will host the informal gathering next year. -- BERNAMA

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