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Apec-Security
SECURITY STEPPED UP IN MANILA AND SUBIC

By: Yong Soo Heong

MANILA, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- Security in Manila and Subic Bay, the venue of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) leaders' summit, has been stepped up following the discovery of bombs at the international airport and at the main gate of the Subic Bay Freeport.

Men in military fatigues were seen along the main thoroughfares from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to the Philippine International Convention Centre (PICC).

But according to General Alfredo Filler, director-general of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, there was no "major security threat" to the 18 heads of state and delegates attending the Apec meeting.

The leaders of the grouping will arrive tomorrow. The trade and foreign ministers are already here.

"All indications point favourably to a successful Apec summit this year," said Filler.

Delegates and journalists attending the Apec meeting at the PICC are also subject to stringent checks.

Besides being screened by electronic scanners, they are also subject to "screening" by guard dogs adept at sniffing out explosives and other dangerous devices.

Meanwhile, anti-Apec protests, described as "low level" by officials, started yesterday.

Five anti-Apec protestors shaved their heads while another 30 began fasting near the PICC.

One of the protestors claimed that President Fidel Ramos had been blinded by the concept of liberalisation and globalisation that would only benefit the developed countries more.

One band of protestors has called for a "people's caravan" convoy from here to Subic. The organisers expect 5,000 people to join them.

Officials said the protestors planned to block off the road link from here to Subic.

However, officials and leaders going to Subic are travelling by air, which is just 30 minutes away.

Malaysian officials will travel to the former American naval base now turned into a duty-free resort on Sunday evening while Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will fly there on Monday morning. -- BERNAMA

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