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Abdullah-Suharto

SUHARTO'S ABSENCE WILL BE GREATLY FELT- ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 13 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi confirmed today that Indonesia will not be represented by President Suharto at the second Asean Informal Summit beginning here on Monday.

However, he said should Suharto make a last-minute decision to appear at the three-day summit, there would not be any problem in making the preparations.

"I don't know if he will (make a last-minute decision) to come," he said when asked by reporters on rumours that Suharto might make it to the meeting after all.

Abdullah said this after attending the opening of the "Private Sector Salute to Asean" conference to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Asean by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Petaling Jaya near here.

Yesterday, Indonesia's State Secretariat Minister Murdiono was quoted as saying in Jakarta that the President would not attend the summit as he had been advised by his doctors to cancel the trip as it would be too tiring for him.

Murdiono said that Foreign Minister Ali Alatas would represent Suharto at the summit.

Abdullah said the other Asean leaders would greatly miss Suharto at the summit "because he is the most senior leader."

"But Indonesia's presence will still be there," he said.

Asked if the Asean heads of state and government would issue a separate statement on the currency and stock market turmoil facing the region at the end of their summit, Abdullah said he could not say.

Asean groups Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. --BERNAMA

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