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APEC-NEWS-CYBERJAYA LEAD

APEC LEADERS LEAVE FOR HOME AFTER SUCCESSFUL APEC RETREAT

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CYBERJAYA, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- Apec leaders started leaving for home today after their customary retreat in Cyberjaya, some 40km south of Kuala Lumpur, but not before agreeing to bring the issue of regulation of international financial markets to the Group of 22 for discussion.

The decision was reached after about eight hours of discussion at the Cyberview Lodge, a resort located in the midst of oil palm plantations and an area poised to be Malaysia's intelligent city.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as Apec chairman then read out the Apec declaration near the lodge's poolside before allowing reporters to ask three questions. Two of them were on U.S. Vice-President Al Gore's statement on the anti-government "reform" movement and another was on the financial market.

Dr Mahathir then bade farewell to the leaders.

Their day in Cyberjaya started with a group photograph session near the poolside amid tight security as a police helicopter hovered above.

The leaders showed up at the retreat in colourful "batik" attire under clear skies after a hectic day of bilateral meetings and a briefing from the Apec Business Advisory Council (ABAC) in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The male leaders donned "batik" shirts which reportedly cost RM600 each while the only woman leader, New Zealand Prime Minister Jenny Shipley, was clad in a lavender-coloured floral "baju kebaya" with a blue sash or "selendang".

Dr Mahathir had said that Cyberjaya was chosen as the venue for the retreat to provide the leaders with an atmosphere of lush greenery and a scenic landscape, and to showcase the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), the country's hub for development of multimedia products and services.

The leaders from 21 Pacific Rim economies were on their second and final day of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit.

Dr Mahathir shook hands with the leaders as they began arriving from 8 a.m.

The media focus was on Dr Mahathir and Gore who enraged Malaysians by supporting the anti-government "reform" movement in his speech at an Apec business dinner last Monday.

The prime minister shook hands with Gore before taking the American leader to sign an Apec commemorative plaque. The other leaders also signed the plaque.

After the group photograph session, the media representatives waited at a holding area nearby until it was time to cover the reading of the declaration later in the evening.

Besides Dr Mahathir, Gore and Shipley, the other leaders at the retreat included Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Chilean President Eduardo Frei Ruiz Tagle, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, Hong Kong China Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa, and Indonesia's President B.J.Habibie.

Others were Japan's Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi; South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung; Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo; Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Bill Skate; Philippine President Joseph Estrada; Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong; Chinese Taipei's representative Dr Chiang Pin-kung; Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai; Peru President Alberto Fujimori; Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov; and Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai.

After the photo session, the leaders proceeded to the mini conference hall for their "retreat meeting".

They broke for lunch and were served with local dishes such as "satay Kajang" (a barbecued meat dish) and "soto ayam" (a spicy chicken soup).

After bidding farewell to the leaders, Dr Mahathir left for a news conference at the Palace of the Golden Horses Hotel in Kuala Lumpur

Cyberjaya, a core component of the 750-sq km MSC, is located on a 2,800-ha site being developed using the environment-friendly concept.

Cyberjaya is situated five kilometres north of Dengkil on the road leading towards Puchong and is next to Putrajaya, the federal government's proposed administrative centre on a 7,000-ha site.

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