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Gathering of world leaders

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THE Apec Business Summit gala dinner at the Putra World Trade Centre on Monday, attended by some of the most powerful men and women in the world, was a glitzy and highly exciting affair.

One of the highlights of the ongoing Apec programme of activities, the event saw the elegantly-decorated Merdeka Hall swamped with 1,000 delegates and officials attending the three-day Business Summit which began on Saturday.

Among those who came in for attention was United States Vice-President Al Gore who was standing in for US President Bill Clinton.

The black tie affair saw Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad sharing the VIP table with Gore and Japanese Premier Keizo Obuchi.

Also in the spotlight were Philippines President Joseph Estrada, New Zealand Prime Minister Jenny Shipley, Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori.

Apec Business Advisory Council chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli and Institute of Strategic and International Studies chairman and chief executive officer Tan Sri Nordin Soviee were there to welcome the high-profile guests.

The summit was held before the sixth Apec Economic Leaders Meeting which began yesterday at the Palace of Golden Horses Hotel and will end today at the Cyberview Lodge, Cyberjaya.

The leader's meeting was preceded by the 10th Apec Ministerial Meeting which began last Saturday with a dinner hosted that night by International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

The Apec programme of activities began with the two-day informal senior officials meeting last Thursday.

Interest was also focused on a photo exhibition organised in conjunction with the business summit. The photographs are a collection of historic and interesting events taken by New Straits Times photographers.

Meanwhile, about 250 people gathered at the Kuala Lumpur City Centre Park on Sunday in a show of protest of globalisation and its adverse effect on people's lives.

The 90-minute gathering was organised by the Asia Pacific People's Assembly.

During the gathering, representatives from various countries in the Asia Pacific region, including those from Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines, took turns to address the crowd.

Some also carried banners while others distributed flyers criticizing Apec.

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