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Safety of Apec leaders will be top priority, says Abdullah

WISMA Putra has yet to get any request from Manila for Philippine President Joseph Estrada to meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) leaders meeting next month.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said this when asked yesterday about a statement on Saturday by Philippine Ambassador to Malaysia Jose Brillantes that arrangements are being made for the bilateral meeting next month.

Estrada made headlines recently with his criticism of the Malaysian Government over the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and at one point had threatened to boycott the meeting in Kuala Lumpur starting November 17.

Abdullah spoke at a news conference after meeting his New Zealand counterpart, Mr Don McKinnon, in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Asked if the security during the Apec leaders' meeting will be tightened in view of the increasingly violent demonstrations staged by those who support the so-called Reformasi movement, Abdullah said the police will decide if there is a need for additional security.

"We want the safety of our guests attending the Apec summit to be taken care of," he said.

Apec groups 18 countries in the Asia-Pacific, from the US to Japan.

The Kuala Lumpur meeting will admit Russia, Vietnam and Peru as new members.

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