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Apec-Abdullah

DPM ARRIVES IN AUCKLAND FOR APEC SUMMIT

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

AUCKLAND, Sept 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi arrived here today to attend the Seventh Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) leaders' summit.

He is making his debut at the Apec summit in his capacity as Deputy Prime Minister as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is unable to make the trip due to a hectic schedule back home.

Besides Dr Mahathir, President B.J. Habibie is not able to be in Auckland due to the problems in East Timor.

Abdullah, accompanied by Datin Seri Endon Mahmood, was treated to a vibrant traditional Maori welcome complete with chanting "warriors" and the beat of traditional drums on what was surely a sunny spring morning.

On hand to meet him at the Auckland International Airport were New Zealand's Attorney-General and Minister for Treaty Negotiations, Sir Douglas Graham and Malaysian High Commissioner to New Zealand Datuk Daniel Tajem.

He was later driven to the Carlton Hotel in downtown Auckland located some 25 kilometres away where he was met by Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

Leaders residing at the Carlton include the host for this year's Apec summit, New Zealand Prime Minister Jenny Shipley, who is using the hotel here since she is based in the capital Wellington, and Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei.

Abdullah's schedule here starts off with bilaterals with Indonesian Trade, Finance and Industry Minister Ginandjar Kartasasmita today and tomorrow with Dr Chiang Pin-Kung, the representative of President Lee Teng Hui of Chinese Taipei.

Prior to the Apec leaders' meeting, he will attend a working lunch among Asean leaders where important issues for Apec and those that could be pursued at the informal Asean summit in November in Manila are expected to be discussed.

The leaders' meeting proper or otherwise referred to as the leaders' retreat gets underway on Monday at the Auckland Museum.

-- BERNAMA

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