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Indonesia-Apec
HABIBIE CANCELS TRIP TO APEC SUMMIT

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JAKARTA, Sept 8 (Bernama) -- Faced with domestic problems following the bloody dispute between factions in East Timor, President B.J. Habibie had to cancel plans to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in New Zealand beginning Saturday.

Justice Minister Muladi, in making the announcement today, said Habibie had to give priority towards finding a solution to the crisis in East Timor or Timtim.

Habibie will be represented by Economic, Financial and Industrial Coordination Minister Ginanjar Kartasasmita.

Besides Habibie, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed too will not be at the meeting. He will be represented by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Muladi said the president also had to concentrate on preparation for the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) scheduled in November.

At the assembly, Habibie will report on the outcome of the referendum supervised by the United Nations in Timtim to determine whether the people want independence or to remain in Indonesia with autonomous status.

The referendum held on Aug 30 showed about 70 per cent of the people in the region, formerly colonised by Portugal, voted for independence.

The bloodshed between the pro-independence group and those who opted to remain integrated with Indonesia prompted the military to declare a state of emergency in the region beginning midnight last night.

Based on the outcome of the referendum, the MPR will decide on the status of Timtim, which had been administered by Indonesia as its 27th region since 1976.

Indonesia entered Timtim in 1975 when Portugal left the region abruptly after colonising it for about 400 years.

Meanwhile, a 10-member delegation from the UN Security Council arrived here from New York today to hold discussions with Habibie and his cabinet members on the East Timor issue.

Five of them are permanent members of the Council including Malaysia who was represented by Datuk Hasmi Agam, while the five others are associate members.

The delegation, led by Martin Anjabu from Namibia, today met Indonesia's Foreign Minister Ali Alatas at his office here.

Tomorrow, they are scheduled to meet with Habibie and Minister of Defence and Security, Wiranto, who is also chief of the Indonesian armed forces.

According to sources here, among other things, the delegation urged Habibie to speed up the MPR sitting in an effort to resolve the East Timor crisis.

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