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Journalists stage demo against refusal to enter summit hall

Habhajan Singh in Jakarta

JAKARTA, Wed: Indonesians seem to have an ingrained art of demonstrating.

While demonstrators were gathering in force at the Indonesian parliament to decide on the fate of its embattled president, Abdurrahman Wahid, media photographers staged another at the convention centre for the Group of Fifteen (G-15).

About 30 photographers placed their cameras, flashes and press tags for a brief demonstration, and a photo shoot of themselves, right in front of the hall, in which leaders of the 19 G-15 countries were gathering.

They were however not asking for the removal of Abdurrahman, who was addressing the summit, while the Parliament was in session just about one kilometre away.

Their grouse was for being refused entry into the convention hall to cover the opening of the two-day summit, which was also attended by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"This is ridiculous. The security and organisers have really messed up," said one photographer.

Foreign journalists who were in the Indonesian capital to cover the eleventh G-15 summit were also barred from making their way into the hall.

They were requested to follow the proceedings from the media centre.

"You can catch the events on the television there," said one organiser.

The media centre scene seemed to be another joke. A group of foreign newswire agency journalists, who were pressured to beat their fellow-colleagues to be the first to report the event, were gathered around one single television set.

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