

30/05/2001

Top priority for delegates' safety at G-15 summit

INDONESIA moved swiftly yesterday to erase concerns about the safety of delegates during the summit in view of the current political turmoil in Jakarta.

The issue was raised by the foreign delegates at the 22nd meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs following reports that the Government would impose a state of civil emergency today to restore law and order in the Indonesian capital.

Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Alwi Shihab told the closed-door meeting that Indonesia would be taking the highest precaution to ensure the safety of the delegates at the summit.

He had informed the meeting that Coordinating Minister for Political, Social and Security Affairs Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had been ordered to undertake necessary action to protect the delegates.

The concern was raised by the delegates as G-15 heads of state or Government arrived yesterday to attend today's summit.

Reports of violence erupting in certain parts of Indonesia and pictures of armed supporters of political parties rioting were the cause of the worries.

There were also reports of possible clashes with security forces today in the compound of the House of Representatives in Senayan, Central Jakarta, as the House is expected to call for a People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) special session to impeach the President on the grounds that he failed to heed two motions of censure against him.

Some 4,000 officers from the military and police will be present at summit venue, Jakarta Convention Centre, to provide security for the G-15 summit and 7,000 will be at the House of Representatives (DPR) to safeguard the plenary session.

The security forces have deployed 27,000 personnel around the capital and security chiefs have warned protesters that the police have been ordered to shoot if the situation warrants it.

The forces have been put on top security alert in certain areas in Indonesia.

National Police chief controller of patrols Brigadier General Sylvanus Wenas yesterday announced that the security forces were on full alert in Jakarta to thwart any unrest.

The Jakarta Post, in its report yesterday, quoted National Police spokesman Inspector General Didi Widayadi as saying that should chaotic situations occur, police would "systematically use tear gas and if rioters still continued and the situation worsened, police would not hesitate to use rubber bullets...and later live bullets."

In a separate statement, the chief of Indonesia Military Adm Widodo Adisucipto said his troops were also in a state of readiness.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar told Malaysian journalists yesterday the summit proceedings were unaffected by the political concerns.

"There's no sign to show that the summit will be disrupted by the current political situation," he added.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived in the capital yesterday evening.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, Senegal President Abdoulaye Wade, Venezuelan President Huga Chavez, Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Ebeid and

Jamaican Prime Minister James Patterson were also scheduled to arrive yesterday.

Other member countries will be represented either by their vice-presidents or high-ranking state officials.

(END)