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Le Tour de Langkawi

MALAYSIAN CYCLISTS SHOULD GO FOR EXPOSURE ABROAD

By: Asan Ahmad

JOHOR BAHRU, Mar 6 (Bernama) -- Malaysian cyclists should be given the chance to compete in overseas championship if they want to see themselves excel further.

British cyclist John Tanner said the Malaysian cyclists were as good as the others but they lacked experience and this is where they should improve.

"They had a good build-up and their body is nice to become good cyclists but because they lack competitive championships they are a bit behind the others", said Tanner.

He said the Malaysian riders had everything what the cyclists should have, but lacked experience and race tactics and so were unable to succeed further.

"Believe me if they are given the chance to compete overseas regularly they can be world class riders," said Tanner.

He was commenting on the riders when asked by the reporters at a press conference here tonight.

He said at the on-going tour the Malaysian cyclists were a class ahead of their Asian counterparts and in the last few stages of the Le Tour de Langkawi Malaysian riders in the likes of M.Kumaresan and Noor Effendy Rosli were the top ten finishers.

"It was a great performance but they lacked race tactics and were unable to win", he said.

The tour's yellow jersey winner Damian McDonald of Giant-AIS Australia also shared the same view with Tanner adding that Malaysian cyclists should look forward to having an attachment with the AIS (Australian Sports Institute).

Apart from that he said, they would have the chance to compete in higher class races in Australia which were held throughout the year.

Damian said what the Malaysian riders need from now on was exposure at more competitive championships and must take a first step to train overseas.

"It's no joke, they are world class riders but should be given the chance to compete at a higher level competition as much as possible which would help to build up their performances", said Damian.

He said that it was still not too late for the Malaysian riders to do so and the earlier the better as they were gearing themselves for the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

Meanwhile Executive Chairman of First Cartel (M) Sdn Bhd, the organisers, Wan Lokman Datuk Paduka Wan Ibrahim said interest in the race was building up following the widespread press coverage of the Le Tour De Langkawi.

"I am proud of the response from the people to this race," he told reporters here.

He was also happy with the close cooperation accorded by the Johor Government to ensure the success of the race.

A total of 134 cyclists from 20 countries are taking part.

He said the idea of the Le Tour de Langkawi came from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to promote the country.

Many had now come forward to be sponsors of the race next year, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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