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NATIONAL HORSE SALE EXPECTED TO FETCH MORE THAN RM1.3 MLN

By: Michael Raj

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- The Fifth National Premier Sale of thoroughbred horses to be held here tomorrow is expected to rake in no less than RM1.3 million in sales, says the chairman of the Totalisator Board of Malaysia, Tan Sri V. Jeyaratnam.

Some 47 thoroughbred horses bred at the National Stud Farm (NSF) at Tanjong Rambutan in Perak would go on sale in what is surely a reflection of the young but fast-growing domestic horse-breeding industry, he told Bernama here.

At last year's sale, 38 horses were sold at an average price of RM34,000 per horse, chalking up an impressive total of over RM1.3 million in sales, while more than 500 horses have been sold since its first sale in 1973.

"Judging from the overall quality and type of horses on offer this year which have shown tremendous improvement, we are expecting good response for this year's sale to be held at the Selangor Turf Club (STC) in Sungei Besi," he added.

Owned by the Totalisator Board, the 48-hectare NSF is managed by Pan Malaysian Pools Sdn Bhd, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of investment holding public-listed company Tanjong plc.

The board, which is the regulatory body for totes (betting), has given the exclusive rights to Pan Malaysian Pools to manage totes in Malaysia, while races are organised by the Malayan Racing Association.

Jeyaratnam said this year's events holds a special significance as it is being held in conjunction with the STC's 100th anniversary, another milestone that the country's racing industry has grown by leaps and bounds.

He said it was significant that the racing industry was now augmented by its own breeding industry, thanks to more than 26 years of hard work put in by the NSF in breeding Malaysian thoroughbreds.

To be conducted by leading Australian auctioneers, William Inglis & Sons Ltd, potential buyers can look forward to buying the best local thoroughbreds, based on their lineage.

Although it has been over 100 years since horses were first introduced in Malaysia, Jeyaretnam said the horse-breeding industry, or otherwise known as the equine industry, was still relatively young in the country and was not fully exploited.

"There is great potential for further development in thoroughbred racing, breeding, equestrian sports as well as for recreational purposes," he said.

He also said the development of the equine industry as an economic activity could lead to a host of spinoffs in the areas of equine-related products and services.

"With the increasing affluence of Malaysians and about 30 riding schools in the country, more people are now able to afford and are increasingly keen to take up horse riding as a form of recreation," he added.

Both Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed and his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, are avid horse lovers, said Jeyaretnam.

He said that although horse racing and polo were among the earliest equine activities introduced in this country, there was definitely an increasing demand for non-racing activities especially in the equestrian sports as well as pleasure riding.

He also said the significant growth in recent years could be attributed to the setting up of the Malaysian Equine Council (MEC) whose key role was to ensure that the promotion of the equine industry took on a more structured note as well as a professional approach.

Some of its activities include training and development of equestrian professionals, sponsorships and support for equestrian competitions, establishing riding facilities, and organising publicity and promotion activities.

To make owning Malaysian-bred horses a rewarding investment, he said new incentives were being introduced for graduates of the National Premier Sale.

Prize monies to the tune of well over RM700,000 are being offered for winners of NSF-sponsored races.

Jeyaratnam also said that in the long term, there were plans for Malaysia to sell its thoroughbreds, at least in a modest way initially, to countries such as Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. -- BERNAMA

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