

14 FEB 1997

De Langkawi

ALL EYES SET ON KOTA KINABALU FOR WORLD CLASS CYCLING

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 14 (Bernama) -- All eyes are focused on the Le Tour De Langkawi, an international cycling race here on Wednesday, in which 150 world class cyclists from 25 countries will vie for more than RM1 million cash prizes.

This year's event costing RM13 million will be an interesting affair as Sabah and Sarawak have been included for the first time in the tour chart, making the event a truly national tour.

Last year, the tour which offered the third biggest prize money in the cycling world, only involved 11 states in Peninsular Malaysia.

The time trials will kick off here and end in Langkawi on March 2.

Sabah and Sarawak were included on the directive of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the patron of Le Tour De Langkawi, that the event should be an all-Malaysian affair.

Sabah has been given the honour as the host state for the first flag-off of the 1,613km tour covering 13 states.

For the next few days, Kota Kinabalu will be the centre of attraction as all international cyclists and officials as well as some 150 local and foreign journalists will converge here to cover the start of the race.

Dr Mahathir is expected to attend a grand welcome lunch for the participants and receive contributions from sponsors of the event on Feb 18.

Sabah Tourism and Environment Minister Datuk Bernard Dompok is scheduled to flag off the riders at Padang Merdeka here on Feb 19.

Datuk Haji Ghani Rashid, chairman of the organising committee for Sabah sector, said some 200 officials and helpers would be deployed to ensure success of the historic event.

He said they have enlisted the services of Kota Kinabalu Municipal Council, police, armed forces, Road Transport Department and other departments to ensure the event proceeded smoothly. -- BERNAMA

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