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Ng and Tan come out tops in the heat

Harris Taib

AT the end 86 gruelling laps in sweltering 39 degree Celcius heat, the day belonged to an overwhelmed Jerry Ng and co-driver Allen Tan who drove hard to win Malaysia's first and most lucrative race - the Proton 300km Merdeka Race.

"We came prepared to win, and win we did," said a delighted Ng, a regular competitor in the Proton championship races and Rally Sprint events. The pair won the main prize, a Proton Putra.

"This is by far my best achievement since I began racing five years ago."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in a yellow Lotus Elise, had earlier led the drivers in a parade lap around the 3.505km Shah Alam circuit before flagging off the race before some 28,000 spectators.

Coming in second was the pair of Jimmy Low and 19-year-old co-driver Lee Kien Loong, who led the first 20 laps of the race but dropped a place owing to inconsistent lap times. They won a Proton Satria.

"It was a marvelous race," said third place winner Abu Bakar Mohamed, who won a Proton Wira.

"The huge turnout was simply fantastic. I believe the organisers did a good job."

Favourite Keifli Othman, the current leader in the Malaysian Formula Campus championship, was the first casualty - retiring after two laps when his Hi-Rev Malaysia Airports Berhad-sponsored 1800cc Proton Putra encountered electrical problems.

National rally driver Karamjit Singh and partner Manvir Jesudasan climbed as high as 11th placing before dropping to 26th overall, also owing to mechanical problems.

Results - Proton 300Km Merdeka Race: 1 Jerry Ng/Allen Tan, 2 Jimmy Low/Lee Kien Loong 3 Abu Bakar Mohamed/Mohamed Adrian.

1800cc Proton Wira/Putra: 1 Jerry Ng/Allen Tan, 2 Jimmy Low/Lee Kien Loong, 3 Tengku Djan Ley/Hu Heng Keong.

1600cc Proton Wira/Proton Satria: 1 Mohamed Adrian/Abu Bakar Mohamed, 2 Kenny Lee/Chua Kim Choy, 3 Alan Yong/Mohamed Zulkifli.

1300cc Proton Wira/Satria/Iswara/Saga: 1 Tony Yong/Tan Lian Aik, 2 Anthony Gan/Andy Gan, 3 Abdul Rahim Ahmad/Mohamed Noor Abdul Ibrahim.

Proton Putra Celebrity Race: 1 Abdul Razak Ahmad, 2 Leonard Tan, 3 Ramziela.

Modenas Kriss 110cc Sprint Race: 1 Chao Chee Hou, 2 Mohamed Salleh Isa, 3 Tai Seng Kooi.

(END)