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Circuit-Proton

PROTON MERDEKA RACE -- THE FIRST AT SEPANG CIRCUIT

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 22 (Bernama) -- The Proton International 300km Merdeka Race will have the rare honour of being the first race at the new RM300 million Sepang Circuit on Dec 11 to 13.

The distinction comes in the wake of Malaysia Airports Berhad's confirmation that the race will be the first to be held at the latest and most advanced circuit designed for next year's Formula One championship.

Being the first racers there, the competitors will set their feet at the ultra modern track even before the luminaries of the FIA Formula One and World 500cc Motorcycle Championship, both are confirmed at the circuit.

Race promoters Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Berhad (Proton) said in a statement here today that the Sepang circuit is one of the safest in the world as there are generous run-off areas for drivers who overshoot corners, safety fence and other shock-absorbing barriers.

To enable spectators to keep track of the close racing, Proton has decided that the race will be held over 2.805km instead of the circuit's normal length of 5.542km.

The race was initiated last year with 47 entries at the Shah Alam Circuit.

It said Proton expected a better response this year especially when the race is held at a new venue that offers a refreshing change and greater challenge.

Besides the Prime Minister's Challenge Trophy, donated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the overall champion in this year's race will walk away with a brand new Proton Satria GTi.

Proton has made it mandatory that all entries must be two-driver teams, one of whom must be a Malaysian novice competition licence holder.

The novice licence holder must not have won a podium finish in either a class or overall category from Jan 1, 1997.

Also each driver cannot drive more than 50 minutes at any one time.

Entry, which closes on Nov 30, is open to all. Entry fees are RM2,500 for sponsored teams and RM1,500 for privateers.

However, late entries from Dec 1 to 5 will be accepted with the late entry fee of RM3,500 for sponsored teams and RM2,000 for privateers.

-- BERNAMA

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