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Showers fail to dampen qualifying session

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THE QUALIFYING session for the Proton International 300km Merdeka Race was momentarily interrupted by heavy showers but the atmosphere at the newly-opened Sepang International Circuit more than made up for it.

The number of spectators who turned up to watch the pre-race events was very encouraging, and it was quite clear that many came to see for themselves the very lavish circuit.

Even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was present to flag off the qualifying session, was amazed with the size and extravagance of the RM286 million facility.

Dr Mahathir earlier presented the Prime Minister's Challenge Trophy to the race promoter and signed a plaque commemorating his visit to the track which is scheduled to host a leg of the World Formula One Championship on Oct 17.

Fastest among the newcomer drivers in qualifying was Adrian Cham who will be driving for the Pert-Motoria Racing Team, who completed the stop and go two-kilometre lap in 1:30.758.

Teammate Omar Mazlan Harun was a second off pace but good for third.

Second place, and also a second off, was Sharjihan Ghause of Genesis World Racing, while Shell Helix Racing's Michael Len and Firhat Mokhzani were fourth and fifth respectively.

Looking at the qualifying times, the top 48 positions are all taken up by vehicles competing in the 1800cc and 1600cc categories.

All three Proton Tiaras competing in the 1300cc class and below finished in the last three spots among the 65 entries.

Only 50 cars will start the race.

Last year's winners Jerry Ng, Jimmy Low and Mohamed Adrian, will also be competing and were given the honour of wearing the numbers 1 to 3 respectively.

Among the entries include a team of three Proton Putra cars fielded by Jetpa Holdings, and Proton distributors in the United Kingdom and Australia who entered two and three cars respectively.

The 107-lap race will be flagged off at 1.30pm today. Tickets are priced at RM12.

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