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Mahathir - Cycling

TOUR DE LANGKAWI, A HOT TEST FOR CYCLISTS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

LANGKAWI, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Le Tour de Langkawi (LTdL), which is being held for the third time, represents a different race for international cyclists.

"It will be a testing ground to test their strength and stamina where they will compete with the weather that is extremely humid," he said when launching the tour and welcoming the participants at a leading hotel here.

Dr Mahathir said the weather during the tour this time around, described as one of the hottest in the world (27-34 degrees Celcius), would pose a major challenge to the top cyclists.

A total of 150 cyclists are taking part in the tour which officially begins tomorrow.

Several team managers have expressed concern over the extremely humid weather upon arrival here for the tour's first stage.

One of the teams even brought along special drinks said able to help its cyclists adjust to the humidity.

Dr Mahathir said: "I'm quite sure that this year will be an interesting year because the tour will be held during one of the hottest seasons in Malaysia where everybody blames it on the El Nino phenomenon."

However, he said, if the cyclists did well in the race by setting new records they could consider themselves to have been tested in full.

"..if you survive and do well I think you have participated in a race that is of a different kind altogether and when you do well here and stand the climate then only one considered you have done very well, indeed", he said.

He said the race would be a great feature for the country as it projected Malaysia as an attractive country worth visiting.

Dr Mahathir hoped television stations would file a true picture about Malaysia during the 12-day event.

"So, it's time now for the tv stations to give the true picture of the situation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had had an undeserving publicity on haze recently when television stations showed pictures of the haze even though when the sky was clear and as a result people did not visit the country.

"Although Kuala Lumpur a little bit hazy today, we do get this problem off and on. But we all survived and I'm still alive and I think everybody will survive," he said.

Dr Mahathir hoped Malaysians would be just as hospitable during the duration of the race as they had always been during past events.-- BERNAMA

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