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COUNCILLOR FLAGS OFF TOUR de LANGKAWI

LANGKAWI, Feb 18 (Bernama) -- Kedah Sports Development and Tourism Committee Chairman Abdul Rahman Ariffin today flagged off the country's prestigious cycling event -- Le Tour de Langkawi -- at the Datai Bay Golf Club here.

Malaysian cycling ace M.Kumaresan shot off second after receiving the greenlight.

The race, that has attracted a world-class field and more countries than any event of its kind outside the world championship and the the Olympic Games, is a national event supported by the government but financially backed by the private sector.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is patron of the race, launched the race and welcomed the participants at a leading hotel here yesterday with the hope that they would do well by setting new records despite the extremely humid weather.

About 150 riders from 24 teams are taking in the race, the third in the series, offers a RM1.5-million prize money, the biggest in Asia and among the top three in the world.

The teams include Malaysia A and B, Mapei-Bricobi of Italy, TVM of Holland, Scigno-Gaerne of Italy, Port Swiss of Switzerland, MROZ of Poland, Saturn of the United States, Tuul Tunturi of Finland, Agro Adler Brandenburg of Germany and Lada Cska Samara of Russia.

The others are from Great Britain, New Zealand, South Africa, Denmark, Ireland, the Philippines, China, Australia, Slovakia, Indonesia, Canada and Kazakhstan.

Malaysia is fielding Kumaresan, Tsen Seong Hoong, Nor Effandy Rosli, Shahrulneeza Mohd Razali, Mohd Mahazir Hamad and Syed Mohd Hussaini Syed Mazlan in an elite team while Malaysia B comprises Hardi Razali, Faizul Izuan Rahman, Wong Ah Tiam, Musairi Musa, Lee Robert and Chun Chee Wai.

The tour starts today with an individual time trial before proceeding to the Kangar-Pulau Pinang sector.

The subsequent sectors are Grik-Kota Baharu, Kota Baharu-Kuala Terengganu, Kuala Terengganu-Kuantan, Kuantan-Mersing, Johor Baharu-Muar, Melaka-Port Dickson, Port Dickson-Shah Alam, Sabak Bernam-Ipoh, Tanjung Malim-Genting Highlands and Kuala Lumpur.-- BERNAMA

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