

02/09/1998

Treat for Form One pupils at equestrian meet

KUALA LUMPUR. Tues. - Form One pupils from 27 selected schools in the Klang Valley will be given the opportunity to watch the Gallop 7th Merdeka Equestrian Carnival 1998.

For this year's annual event, the organising committee aims to expose and encourage equestrian sports among the young and potential riders.

The carnival is seen as a positive way to expand the riding fraternity in Malaysia with a view to finding new talents.

To be held from Sept 24 to 27 at the Bukit Kiara Equestrian and Country Resort, Bukit Kiara here, the schoolchildren will be treated to free lunch packs, ice cream and gifts.

Equestrian Association Malaysia president Tan Sri Musa Hitam said today it was important to dispel the popular belief that equestrian sports was for the elite and therefore expensive.

He also urged clubs with equestrian facilities to offer cheaper rates for children, for example, RM5 per hour for a lesson.

"As it is, we have already identified about 20 young riders who may be at par with other international riders," Musa told a Press conference.

Being held in conjunction with the 41st Merdeka day celebrations, this year's event has sanctioned Gallop Ranch as the main organiser and sponsor.

Gallop Ranch, a private owned ranch which is professionally managed, is located in the vicinity of Putrajaya.

It will be officiated at 9am on Sept 27 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who first mooted the idea in 1992.

"The carnival will further contribute towards the development and enhancement of the quality and competitiveness of the sport in Malaysia," Musa said, adding that at least five countries were expected to participate.

Invitations will also be extended to heads of Government departments, heads of foreign missions, ministers and deputy ministers, corporate leaders and sponsors.

Musa said there will be a two-day competition for dressage (discipline of horse and rider) and showjumping (demonstrating the horse and rider's skill at an obstacle course).

For the former, the competition will be for 14 classes and 10 classes for the latter.

Riders stand to win cash prizes totalling RM25,000 while the winner of the Grand Prix open will win a Perodua Kancil to be given away by Dr Mahathir.

Organising committee chairman Md Azar Ismail said invitations to the carnival were also extended to colleges in the area such as Sunway and Damansara Utama.

"We will also provide a special grandstand for the children at the carnival," he said, adding that more was needed to be done to attract children.

"Equestrian sports is a healthy sport and is therapeutic for disabled children as it teaches them self-confidence and balance."

Md Azar said several organisations for disabled children had already participated in equestrian classes provided by certain clubs.

(END)