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21 teams to take part in Solar Cycle Challenge '99

JOHOR BARU, Wed. - Some 200 people representing 21 teams have confirmed their participation in the Malaysia International Solar Cycle Challenge '99.

The event, organised by Johor Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, will be held from June 5 to June 9 covering a distance of at least 880km from Johor Baru to Alor Star.

The host will send 12 teams for the race, followed by Universiti Utara Malaysia (four) and one team each from Universiti Teknologi Petronas, Universiti Teknologi Tun Hussein Onn, Thailand, Germany and United Kingdom.

"The United States and Australia have shown interest too but to date have yet to confirm the number of participants.

"This event is the continuation of the World Solar Cycle Challenge '97 in Australia where UTM's 'Basikal Impian 2020' emerged champion in Category A," said UTM Public Relations Officer Norazilla Abdul Rahman in an interview.

The race involves five ministries namely Education; Science, Technology and Environment; Energy, Communications and Multimedia; Transport; and Culture, Arts and Tourism.

An exposition showcasing the most advanced and high-tech sun-powered wheelers from all over the world would also be held in the vicinity of UTM in conjunction with the event.

Norazilla said the objective of the event was to introduce solar power as the alternative energy for the new millennium.

"Solar energy is both cost efficient and environment friendly.

"We also hope to show foreign participants the beauty of our small towns. This is why our itinerary covers mainly inner roads. The race also gives the competitors plenty of opportunities to mingle with other teams and to exchange ideas on solar racing," she said.

The challenge starts from UTM with stops in Malacca, Shah Alam, Kuala Lumpur, Teluk Intan, Taiping and finally Alor Star. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to launch the event in Kuala Lumpur on June 8.

The race is divided into three classes namely A: Non-Aerodynamic Standard Bicycle, B: Non-Aerodynamic Recumbent or Experimental Cycle, and C: Aerodynamic Experimental Vehicle (minimum three wheels open class).

"All the three classes must have a minimum solar panel of 0.15 square metre and a maximum of two square metres.

"The main difference in the three categories is that Class A and Class B participants may change approved batteries at any time.

"On the other hand Class C can only use one set of batteries throughout the entire race," she said.

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