

02 FEB 1999

Cycling-Russians

RUSSIANS YET TO ARRIVE FOR LE TOUR DE LANGKAWI

LANGKAWI, Feb 2 (Bernama) -- All 25 teams participating in this year's Le Tour de Langkawi (LTdL) except Russia have arrived for the world's third most prestigious cycling showcase, according to the organisers, First Cartel (M) Sdn Bhd.

Its chairman Wan Lokman Datuk Paduka Wan Ibrahim said today the organisers were hoping that Russia would arrive later today since the competition would begin here tomorrow.

The Langkawi stage of the LTdL comprises the criterium and time trial races held in Kuah town.

The 4th edition of the LTdL also involved five newcomers including Italy's Cantina Tollo Alexia Alluminio and Acceptcard Pro Cycling from Denmark, he told reporters.

Last year's overall team champions Mapei-Quickstep from Italy spearheaded by world no 7 Andrea Tafi as well as team Saturn from the United States are again expected to be tussling for honours.

Wan Lokman also said several leading professional outfits participating in this year's LTdL had expressed interest in contesting in the fifth edition next year, reflecting growing recognition for the race from regional and world cycling teams.

However Wan Lokman did not name the teams.

The LTdL '99, which offers RM1.5 million in cash prizes, is ranked third behind the Le Tour de France and Giro d' Italia.

It will be held over 12 stages covering 1,773.5km before ending in Kuala Lumpur on Feb 14. This year's edition of the LTdL has attracted the participation of 150 riders.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad officially flagged off the event here today over a welcoming luncheon for the cyclists.

Meanwhile, the organisers are giving the Russian team until 9am tomorrow to check in, said LTdL technical department head Zulkifle Alias said.

As of 6pm today the organisers had not received any word from the Russian team.

"They have to be here before 9am tomorrow since the time trial event which starts at that time requires at least four riders from each team to take part," he said.

The Russians were the last to confirm participation at the LTdL, Zulkifle added.

-- BERNAMA

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