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PM wants better involvement in equestrian

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MALAYSIA could be a centre for equestrian sports in the Southeast Asian region if the sport was promoted accordingly.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government was keen to promote equestrian in the country as world class riders and facilities to complement the effort were already in place.

Leading by example by participating in the 20-kilometre Perdana Classic category of the PDRM/TNB International Endurance Ride 2001 here yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the government was making available more facilities.

"I have to lead by example, forced to ride the horse ... very teruk la for a person of my age but if I don't start something, people won't do ... that is one of the things the Government is doing," he said in jest when asked on the Government's efforts to promote the sport.

On a serious note, the Prime Minister, who is 76, said various Government agencies, like the police, were also helping to promote the sport.

"We're doing quite a lot to encourage all kind of sport."

He added that the public should also discard the notion that horse riding was an expensive sport.

The premier explained that in many other countries diplomats will never have the chance to go horse riding because it was too expensive, but in Malaysia the cost was comparatively very low.

Dr Mahathir took part in the Perdana Classic team event where the participants were required to complete a 20-kilometre ride in under two hours.

The Prime Minister's team finished second behind the Mayor's Team led by Kota Kinabalu Mayor Datuk Abdul Ghani Rashid.

The race started from the Putrajaya mounted police unit stable in Putrajaya at 7.30am and ended the Limited Distance ride at the Residence Hotel in Universiti Tenaga Nasional in Bangi.

Dr Mahathir finished third in the individual category, crossing the finishing line in one hour 48 minutes and 14 seconds.

The champion was Datuk Abdul Ghani Rashid (1:1:59) with Inspector Mohamad Din Mat second (1:2:00).

Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai, Deputy Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Jamil Johari and Tenaga Nasional Berhad chairman Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis were among those present.

"We rode for only about 17 kilometres today as some of the tracks were too muddy. This is not my longest ride as I've done over 30 kilometres riding in Argentina," said the Prime Minister.

"It was very humid today but we still made it."

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