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Mahathir-Equestrian

PM LAUNCHES MALAYSIA'S FIRST HARNESS DRIVING CENTRE

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 26 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched a harness driving centre, the first in the country, at the STC Equestrian and Sports Centre in Seri Kembangan here today.

Dr Mahathir, who is patron of the Malaysian Equine Council, also participated in the final round of the harness driving competition. He was later announced fifth in the VIP event.

In his opening speech, Dr Mahathir encouraged families to take up horse riding or harness driving as a recreational activity.

"I hope this sport will get on and people will realise there is a healthy sporting aspect in horse racing," he said.

Dr Mahathir said horse riding has now become a popular sport in Malaysia and he hoped harness driving would contribute to a healthy development in the equestrian scene.

"In the past, it was associated with horse racing and gambling and it is not a welcomed aspect of equestrian sport in Malaysia. Gradually, it got on and today we see many clubs and competitions and people are showing more and more interest," he said.

The STC (Selangor Turf Club), in its statement, said harness driving, which involves the steering of a horse strapped to a cart by a driver seated in the cart, is one of the fastest growing equestrian sport in the world.

Harness horses may be trained for both recreational driving or for competition.

It said that in order to launch the harness driving project, the STC Equestrian Centre purchased some ponies and constructed the sulkies, which consist of two-wheeled carts, and trained personnel in the sports of harness driving.

STC Equestrian and Sports Centre chairman Tunku Datuk Seri Shahabuddin Tunku Besar Burhanuddin, in his speech said: "It all began with an idea suggested by the prime minister, a little over a year ago, to introduce harness driving with an aim to promote the sport as a recreational activity in Malaysia."

As part of its community support programme, the STC Equestrian and Sports Centre also presented a donation of RM50,000 to Bakti, the welfare body of wives of ministers and deputy ministers, at the launch.

Bakti president Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali accepted the donation.

-- BERNAMA

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