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PM to make debut in the saddle

EQUESTRIAN fans will see some firsts at the STC Equestrian championship 2001 starting at the Selangor Turf Club (STC) in Seri Kembangan, Selangor today.

The championship, the last national equestrian meet before the Kuala Lumpur Sea Games next month, will see harness driving competition, a sort of horse-racing on chariot, for the first time.

And for the first time, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be one of the competitors.

The harness driving competition will be divided into three parts - dressage and presentation on Thursday, speed and agility and the marathon on Saturday and Sunday. The Prime Minister will be competing in the marathon category on Sunday morning.

The championship will also see the second leg of the South-East Asia World Cup showjumping qualifying league which will see riders vying to represent the region for the World Cup Showjumping series.

National Sea Games riders and those from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore will compete in the event and some other classes.

However, what remains to be seen is whether the national selectors will try a new combination in the events.

Recently, our riders competed against the Filipinos, Thais and Indonesian in the CSIO Nations Cup at the Merdeka Masters 2001 in Kuang and the combination then finished third behind Thailand and the Philippines.

Many equestrian lovers blamed the combination for the embarrassing defeat as there are one or two riders who could help win the event or at least finish second and having observed the scene closely for the last two years, the writer agrees with their assessment.

The first two days will see the junior classes being competed. Those expecting top-notch competition should come on Saturday and Sunday.

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