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Scuderia Kelana sending out a strong chill

SCUDERIA Kelana have gathered a team of champions which could sent shivers down the spine of their rivals for the Merdeka Millennium Endurance (MME) at Sepang Circuit on Aug 31.

With three Class C 1,600cc cars, team manager Raja Zaini Mohamed Noor said the team are confident of winning the overall championship.

Driving the lightweight Honda Civic Type-R, the first of Scuderia's team will comprise top local circuit drivers Eddie Liew, Ng Kok Chin and Nurmad Jusat.

"I think Eddie (Liew) needs no introduction among racing fans after his recent victory at the Asia Touring Car Championship in Shah Alam," said Raja Zaini.

"Ng is the Proton Cup champion in 1995 and the Ford TX3 champion from 1992 to 1994 while Nurmad is a former Asian Formula 2000 driver."

Team Two will be made up of Wong Yew Choong, who is 1997 Proton Cup novice champion, Firhat Mokhzani, who is the unofficial winner of the last Proton 300km Merdeka International race with Nurmad, and Sharjihah Ghouse, who won the 1998 edition with Keifli Othman.

Raja Zaini said Scuderia's third team will be made up of celebrities but the drivers are yet to be confirmed.

However, none of Scuderia's drivers finished in the top three at last year's 12-hour event, which was won by Proton Pert trio Karamjit Singh, Jimmy Low and Tommy Lee in a Class A Proton Wira.

Second and third places went to the Class A car TVR Chimaera and a Lotus Elise respectively.

Drivers under the Scuderia flag have won numerous races over the years, including the support races for the Petronas Malaysian F1 GP in 1999, 2000 and 2001.

Kan Chee Hong won the first edition while Jimmy Low was victorious in 2000 and 2001.

Introduced last year, the MME is Malaysia's first 12-hour endurance race and is held as part of the National Day celebrations.

Participants - with three drivers to a team - flag off at midnight on Aug 31 and they take turns to complete a gruelling challenge to finish the race at noon on Merdeka Day.

The race is divided into four categories - Class A (over 1850cc), Class B (1,601-1,850cc); Class C (1,301-1600cc) and Class D (1,000-1,300cc).

The closing date for entries is Aug 20. Those interested in joining can call 03-8526-2045 for more information.

Qualifying session will be on the preceding daym, Aug 29, making the 2001 Merdeka Millennium Endurance a three-day affair.

* SIXTY off-roading enthusiasts will embark on 20 machines for a 36-day 11,000km journey to India, passing through Thailand, Laos and China next year.

The event, starting on April 19, will see them circumvent the Himalayas and setting up camp on the northern ascent to Mount Everest, about 5,000 metres above sea level, making it an adventure that could make Malaysia really proud.

Event director Thomas Foo said they would also pass through several remarkable places like the Isthmus of Kra, Thailand's narrowest part, the ancient city of Dali, Lasha, Taj Mahal, and even the Bollywood town of Mumbai before the participants and machines are shipped home.

"We would have to handle some extreme conditions, from the severest of heat to the coldest of climates. At places like the Everest base camp, we would also have to live with only 25 per cent oxygen compared to sea level," he said at the launch of the event in Kuala Lumpur on Friday.

Malaysian Motoring Association acting president Datuk Dr Mydin Musa said the journey is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and they would use it to spread the message of goodwill, co-operation and friendship.

Mydin also took the chance to announce the revival of the PPM Mobility Park which he said was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1997 only to be shelved because of the economic downturn then.

He said the integrated motorsports park would have a clubhouse, service centre, obstacle course and a caravan campsite and is a first in Malaysia.

"We have acquired a huge piece of land in Johor for the project. Other States have also shown their interest in having such a park," Mydin said.

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