

25/08/2002

Behind the scenes

I REFER to your editorial "Thai Reincarnation" dated August 11.

I think you have missed a point in your observation regarding pioneers in the 4x4 rallies. Malaysia was the first to organize the Asian Rally series, which ran for five years.

The five years Asian Rally Series was the brainchild of Persatuan Pemotoran Malaysia (PPM) which was registered in 1996.

Steven Ng and Tadayuki Sasa approached me then, as I was involved in sports. Datuk Osu Sukam held the presidency for three years and had tendered his resignation after handing over the post of the president to me. Since then, I have been the president of the PPM.

The Asian Rally Series gained momentum when our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed gave the blessing for the Challenge trophy to be called the Prime Minister's Challenge Trophy and flagged off the Second Asian Rally in 1997. Silverstone took up the title sponsorship.

The Fourth Series witnessed a sudden turn of event when Silverstone surprised me at when it unveiled a new logo for the event and replaced that of the PPM.

And the Fifth Series saw a diversion when Silverstone decided, without any consultation with PPM, to part ways.

The Fourth Series saw PPM being relegated to a promoter status, from organizer.

The irony of all this, was that Silverstone chose to part ways by changing the name of the last series to Rally of Asia.

However, PPM organized the "Mission to India 2002" jointly with Thomas Foo of Asia Off-road Centre and Kelvin Liang of Formula Off-road Equipment. Our sincere gratitude goes to Simex for taking up the title sponsorship.

What baffled me most was the honours given to Sasa turning him into a hero, while no song was sung for the real heroes who returned safely to Malaysia after a hectic 36 days escapade to India.

There was no welcoming party, no thanksgiving dinner, no appreciation from any tourism or sports ministry officials. Only "dukacita".

In fact PPM never existed in as far as the Sports Ministry's motoring programmes are concerned.

Sasa, though an enthusiast in motoring activities, his objectives are solely a business concern. His exit from the Malaysian scene was inevitable.

No wonder Sasa has reincarnated himself as a Thai motoring promoter, doing well as you have rightfully put it.

Malaysia is definitely not lacking in event promoters, that is for sure. Event promotion is definitely an individualistic industry.

We Malaysians promote motoring as a sport while enthusiasts like Sasa do