

09/08/2002

More should be done for cyclists

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MORE should be done to develop cyclists at the grassroots level, particularly since the country is now hosting two international cycling tours of significant value.

Clear Mission Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Wan Lokman Wan Ibrahim said efforts to build a reliable pool of cyclists should also be concentrated on giving young riders the opportunity to compete against the top riders in Europe and other countries.

Speaking at a Press conference after Clear Mission received sponsorship from Milo for the Gamuda Eagle Tour of Malaysia at Wisma OCM yesterday, Wan Lokman said the responsibility of developing young talent should not be laid solely on the Malaysian National Cycling Federation (MNCF).

"There could be more cooperation between the National Sports Council, the Malaysian Schools Sports Council and the Sports Ministry. There has to be a push factor in which every level of development is taken care off," he said.

"Ideally, we should have three levels of competition to develop these riders. We already have the Le Tour de Langkawi (TDL) and now, conceptualised by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, we have the Gamuda Eagle Tour.

"The TDL provides a challenge for those from among the top riders in the world and the Gamuda Eagle Tour is more of a platform for the top Malaysian, Asean and Asian cyclists," said Wan Lokman.

"Now we should develop a tour for the level below the Gamuda Eagle Tour for the local riders. In fact, the Prime Minister is looking forward to more tour events being staged in the country," he added.

"But the development of cyclists should not be limited to having local events. The riders that we develop should be given the opportunity to be based closer to high level competition."

Wan Lokman pointed out that top riders from other countries are usually based in Europe where some of the top tour events in the world are held.

A good example, said Wan Lokman, is the Down Under Team which has confirmed participation in the Gamuda Eagle Tour. The team comprises up-and-coming Australian cyclists who are based in Belgium and compete in races around Europe against competition of higher levels than those available in their own country.

"We should also look to do the same for our top riders. They should be given exposure and by constantly competing against better cyclists, they will only improve their performances," said Wan Lokman.

Four Malaysian teams will compete in the Gamuda Eagle Tour of Malaysia which will be held in Langkawi on Aug 14-18. They are the national team and club teams from the NSC, Kuala Lumpur and Sweet Nice Selangor.