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Tour a good launchpad for local, regional cyclists

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WITH 21 teams confirmed, the inaugural Gamuda Eagle Tour of Malaysia in Langkawi on Aug 14-18, should provide a good launchpad for local and regional cyclists to excel.

Organisers Clear Mission Sdn Bhd yesterday received a contribution of cash and gifts worth RM50,000 from Nestle Malaysia which included a green jersey carrying the Milo label for the event's Most Promising Cyclist.

"This is a good initiative focusing on the second liners in cycling and a good way of developing distance riders. We extend our supporting hand because we see the focus that Clear Mission is giving to development. That is very special," said Nestle Malaysia sports marketing and sponsorship manager Datuk Dina Rizal.

Dina handed a mock cheque representing Nestle's contribution for the event to Clear Mission's chief executive officer Datuk Wan Lokman Wan Ibrahim at Wisma OCM in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Wan Lokman, in thanking Nestle for their support, said that Malaysians could expect more tour events to be staged in the country, which Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called for.

"The idea of staging the Gamuda Eagle Tour was conceptualised by the Prime Minister himself and he wants a lot more events to be held around the country," said Wan Lokman.

"As we have the Le Tour de Langkawi, which is a high profile race, this event is a rung below that, catering for the up-and-coming cyclists in the region. Initially, we had planned for just Malaysian and Asian riders but the response has been so good we decided to make it a more international event," he added.

The Gamuda Eagle Tour will feature 21 teams including three European national teams from Ireland, Austria and Albania. Malaysia will be represented by the national team, the National Sports Council team, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Sweet Nice.

The national teams from Asia are Iran, Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Mongolia, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, while the international clubs competing are team Giant Asia (Taiwan), Jura Suisse-Nippon Hudo (Switzerland), Down Under (Belgium) and Krone (Norway).

The tour will take competitors around Langkawi, beginning with the Padang Matsirat to Kuah town time trial on Aug 14. It will also include a Gunung Raya hillclimb and ends with the 50km criterium in Kuah.