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Sports-Motorsports

300 DRIVERS, 100 CARS READY TO ROAR AT SEPANG CIRCUIT

SEPANG, July 24 (Bernama) -- Three hundred drivers, 100 cars with 1,000 mechanics and crew members are ready to test their physical and machine fitness during the 12-hour Merdeka Millennium Endurance (MME) Race 2004 at the Sepang Circuit end of next month.

Sepang International Circuit (SIC) chairman Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir said the response from racing teams, including from outside Malaysia, for the event had been overwhelming.

"Five drivers from Hong Kong and one from Taiwan are among the first participants who have registered for this race that will be held from Aug 26 to 28.

"To date, SIC have received more than 50 entries. The last day for submission of entries is Aug 16," Mokhzani told reporters at the soft-launch of the MME 2004 at the circuit, here today.

However, he said out of 100 cars, only 77 machines would be permitted to race on the final day on Aug 28, in accordance with the competition rules as approved by the International Motorsports Federation (FIA).

"Based on the racing licence issued by FIA for SIC, Sepang Circuit is only allowed a maximum of 77 cars for any racing competition in the interest of safety of the competitors," he said.

He said the final round of the MME 2004 would be held on Saturday, Aug 28 where drivers would be flagged off at 10am while the qualifying rounds would be held a day earlier.

"The rationale behind SIC's decision not to have the event on the Merdeka day is simply to give opportunity to local racing fans to join the MME celebrations. In previous years, many of them missed the opportunity to come to the circuit because they were working for other events in conjunction with the National Day," he added.

Introduced in 2000 with 52 entries, the MME had received more than 77 entries since 2001 which forced the SIC as the organizers to select the best 77 cars based on the qualifying times and their competition categories.

Four categories are being contested with the open class for all the modified cars - class A for those above 1900cc and Class B for cars between 1601cc and 1900cc. Class C is competed by cars with engine capacity of 1600cc and below.

Tickets are priced as low as RM20 for entry at the Main Grandstand and they can be purchased at the circuit or via internet at www.malaysiangp.com.my.

-- BERNAMA

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