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Abdullah-LTdL

ABDULLAH: LTDL CATALYST FOR TOURISM/CYCLING DEVELOPMENT

PENANG, Feb 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi hopes the Le Tour de Langkawi (LTdL) will continue its role not only as a catalyst to promote the development of cycling in Malaysia and Asia, but also to entice more visitors to this country.

"Over the past few years, sports events are fast becoming an active way to promote tourism," he said in a message in the LTdL's souvenir programme, here today.

He said events, such as LTdL, had helped portray a positive image of Malaysia as a vibrant and attractive destination to potential visitors.

The Prime Minister said people around the world could obtain an accurate picture of what Malaysia had to offer through extensive daily coverage, delayed telecasts and highlights on television.

Abdullah also noted that the fact that LTdL had been promoted three times in a period of just eight years by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), is a proof that the tour has progress on the right track.

"The government recognises the importance of LTdL to the country and I look forward to seeing it continue to grow and succeed in the years to come," he said.

Being the highest-ranked stage race in Asia, he said the tour was becoming the race which all Asians could look up to.

"For the cyclists, it gives them the privilege to ride side by side with other professionals who have experienced action at the highest level.

By hosting this world class event, we are actually nurturing world class athletes too," said Abdullah.

Meanwhile the organisers of LTdL, First Cartel (M) Sdn Bhd, paid tribute to former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his assistance in making it a world class cycling race.

"Starting at 2.5 status, LTdL has now turned out to be a world class

bicycle race, and now it has attained a 2.2 status within eight years," it said in a letter issued to Bernama here today.

It said: "The man responsible for taking the tour to its present height is none other than the former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself."

Dr Mahathir's interest and passion in the tour grew with subsequent races and he believed that the tour had served its purpose in portraying Malaysia's positive image, it said.

It said Dr Mahathir once said that the race was one way the world could see Malaysia, since it moved from one place to another during the race, and he was also confident that the race would one day be equal to the Tour de France in terms of organisation and competition.

-- BERNAMA

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