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Title : Five-day Tour de Timor cycling race set to start on Aug 24

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SINGAPORE : The first "Tour de Timor" cycling race will start on August 24. The five-day endurance race is part of President Jose Ramos-Horta's efforts to promote tourism.

There are some 300 cycling teams from all over the world taking part in the race. They will be travelling through nine of Timor-Leste's 13 districts in just five days.

They will also be spending four nights amongst traditional villages of the country, so they have to be prepared for some not-so-comfortable nights.

A group of women from Singapore will bring close to 10 kilogrammes of nutritional supplements along with them.

Jasmine Wong, co-founder of The Chain Reaction Project, said: "At the end of the race, we'll be drinking recovery drinks called 'RecoveRite' and that's going to help us replenish what we've expended in the day.

"Throughout the race, we'll be taking gels - they are like high glycemic index, a quick source of power for us and that's probably taken every hour as well. We have electrolytes as well to replenish any salt lost when you perspire."

Besides getting various sponsors to help them with equipment, the Singapore group has also started a charity organisation and raised some S\$30,000 so far.

"This will go directly to a charity in Timor (Leste) that works with water sanitation and basic housing," said Anina Boshoff, co-founder of The Chain Reaction Project.

"A lot of people were quite excited about Timor Leste and the opportunity to help that country as well, so I think the race and what we're doing is a timely opportunity for people to come in," said Zhang Tingjun, co-founder of The Chain Reaction Project.

But it is not the end of the story even when the race is over. The Chain Reaction Project has commissioned an independent filmmaker to document their trip in Timor Leste.

"A friend of mine introduced me to The Chain Reaction's girls and I was immediately captivated by their cause. I think it's a real unique opportunity for them to go in and raise the profile... and bolster the image and reputation of Timor Leste," said Grant Knisely, an independent filmmaker. - CNA /ls