

IRF 2007 World Rafting Championships to Begin at Inje's Naerinchon River in June.

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Expected to be the largest international rafting event with over 40 countries and 500 competitors, young rafters from around the world will fiercely contend for rankings in the sprint, slalom and downriver at this year's 4th World Rafting Championships to be held on the Naerinchon river in Inje, Kangwon province.

At a press gathering held in Seoul's Plaza Hotel on January 30, the chairman of the 2007 World Rafting Championships Organizing Committee and magistrate of Inje, Park Sam-rae was joined by representatives of several collaborative firms. Jo Hyun-il of Unione Communications and Jang Geun-bok from the joint MBC/ESPN broadcasting venture were on hand to promote the event which begins in June.

Among the 42 member nations of the World Rafting Federation (IRF), 40 nations with approximately 500 competitors are expected to participate in this competition. The best mens and womens teams, each comprising of six members, will run down three types of courses, the sprint, the slalom and the downriver.

In 2001, the IRF sponsored the first World Rafting Championships in the United States. Since then, it has been held once every two years when teams from each country can fully show off their talent and abilities.

After the 2005 competition was held in Ecuador, Korea's town of Inje beat out the Japanese town of Gunma to win the bid to host the tournament.

Like previous events, this year's competitions will hold three separate events, the sprint, the slalom, and the downriver.

The sprint is a short-distance, high-speed race where the athletes' best are required as they use their entire body to tackle some of the fastest rapids. In the first round, each team will get the chance to compete after which only the top 8 teams will move on to the second round. In the second round, only the victors will advance in single elimination.

The slalom is a fierce event that requires competitors to negotiate at most 12 gates. Gates are such that athletes must paddle upstream to pass through them. This event emphasizes strength, technique and teamwork. Each team is given two attempts. Teams that pass through every gate and with the best times are considered the best.

The downriver event is at least a 10 kilometer rafting marathon. An endurance race with at least class 4 difficulty rapids, this course is a combined test of technique and physical stamina.

Regarding this competition, organizing committee chief and Inje county magistrate Park Sam-rae said, "Through this tournament, the town of Inje's Naerinchon river will become known to the world as a rafting site.

In addition, 2007 World Rafting Championships Organizing Committee will be working in collaboration with Unione Communications.

(Translated from Korean by WRCOC.)