

Andrejsala Water Festival celebrates opening of the sailing season in Rīga

Rīga, June 2, 2007

Saturday, June 2. An all-day Water Festival 2007 takes place in Andrejsala, inviting everyone to a rich programme of arts and music, exploration of nautical themes, recreation and active lifestyle. For the first time in Rīga, visitors are able to directly observe such a diverse and splendid gathering of watercraft comprising yachts, powerboats, cabin cruisers, a Naval Forces vessel and several catamarans.

Valters Māziņš, chairman of the board of SIA "Jaunrīgas attīstības uzņēmums", which is the main initiator of the festival, comments the objective of the festival: "We wish to enkindle greater interest in using the Daugava embankment and the river's waters – both for recreational purposes and for traffic; therefore, today we're unveiling also a new yacht harbour at the Eksporta port. It is important for Rīga to develop dynamic water traffic routes, suitable harbours and mooring places, as well as aquatic recreation and tourism in general."

During the Water Festival (at 12:00 PM), Rīga unveils its sailing season with a competition involving sea yachts, microyachts and catamarans. In total, more than 30 sailing boats are expected to participate, some of them well known to the public and some new arrivals: Tike (helmsman Andris Zirdziņš), Micros (helmsman Vladimirs Smoļakovs), Liberty (captain Jānis Grīslis), Lettland (captain Igors Bukovskis), Spaniel (captain Gunārs Šteinerts), etc.

"In the recent years, sailing has rapidly gained popularity and there has been a particularly fast growth in the numbers of sea yachts. Latvian yachters are keen to participate in international regattas, while foreigners are often seen at Latvian races, which have since become much more challenging. Because of such rapid growth, yacht mooring facilities need to be modernised and new yacht clubs have to be created," says Armands Plāte, president of the Yachting Union of Latvia.

According to Uldis Kronblūms, chairman of the board of the Latvian Multihull Yachts Association, "the fleet of multihull yachts, namely, catamarans and trimarans, also has been expanding and there are more and more people enthusiastic about sailing the fastest yachts possible, many of which are crafted by the enthusiasts themselves".

The Water Festival also unveils a new promenade located on the Daugava embankment near the central area of Rīga. It will allow Rigans to take 2.6-kilometre-long walks along the river from the South End of Andrejsala to the northmost tip of the Eksporta port's dam. The idea is to provide a recreational place that is comfortably located near the river and can offer something new to people enjoying active lifestyle. The promenade will gradually become available for the general public's daily use, and it will be further upgraded and maintained in order to fit in with the rest of the Andrejsala development.

Another highlight of the festival is a parade of specialty watercraft built from wood and demonstrations by catamaran navigators, water-skiers, jet-skiers and motor cruisers. Varonis, a command and supplies ship of the Latvian Naval Forces, and Kapella, a training vessel, will both offer excursions onboard. A guided tour will take visitors to the construction site of a two-masted wooden yacht within the territory of Andrejsala.

The Water Festival's programme is conceived with families and children in mind and contains activities related to navigation and waters as well as a broad range of art and music shows.

The Water Festival 2007 in Andrejsala is jointly organised by SIA "Jaunrīgas attīstības uzņēmums", the Latvian Multihull Yachts Association, the Rīga City Council, the Yachting Union of Latvia and SIA "Rīgas jahtu centrs Andrejosta".