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Dragon boats wake up for race festival

By **SHARON LEM**, TORONTO SUN

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The 22nd Telus Toronto International Dragon Boat Race Festival got off to a colourful start with the opening ceremony Thursday at Sunnyside Pavilion. The races run June 18-20. (DAVE ABEL/Toronto Sun)

The mystical dragons were out yesterday heralding the 22nd Telus Toronto International Dragon Boat Race Festival which takes place next month.

About 100 spectators gathered at Sunnyside Beach to witness the eye-dotting ceremony, which supposedly awakens the dragon from hibernation.

With the touch of a Chinese calligraphy brush on the dragon's eyeball, the dragon boat season officially opened yesterday.

"We're very happy and proud to have introduced dragon boating to Toronto 22 years ago. This cultural and sporting event connects people of different age and ethnic backgrounds from different parts around the world," said organizer Benny Cheung, president of the Toronto Chinese Business Association.

This year the dragon boat festival will host more than 160 teams involving 5,000 participants from around the world. The races will be held at Long Pond, Centre Island from June 18 to 20.

The Toronto Sun is a diamond media sponsor for the event.

For more information or to register, log onto www.dragonboats.com or call 416-595-0313.

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