

Rocket race fires up central Turkey's salt flats



A rocket takes off during the competition in Aksaray, Sept. 8, 2019.

» SEVENTY-NINE teams, comprised of high school and university students, competed in the TEKNOFEST Rocket Race in central Turkey's Lake Tuz salt flats.

In the vast salt flat near the shores of the lake in Aksaray, students showcased their talents in the latest edition of the race that brought together 28 teams last year.

The race was sponsored by Turkish rocket manufacturer, Roketsan and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK).

The finalists were picked from among 571 teams. After the final touches, the students launched their rockets in front of an audience of top officials, including Minister of Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank.

The winners of the race will be announced on Sept. 11, the last day of the race.

The event saw teams compete in low-altitude (1,500 meters) and high-altitude (3,000 meters) categories. The rockets must reach their respective altitudes and land safely with their load to win the top title.

The race is among the many events that are part of the 2nd TEKNOFEST, Turkey's biggest technology festival which will kick off in Istanbul on Sept. 17.

Selçuk Bayraktar, head of Turkish Technology Team Foundation and one of the organizers of the festival, was also among those watching the rocket race in Aksaray.

Bayraktar said this year's TEKNOFEST is expected to be "bigger and more exciting." Along with the rocket race, TEKNOFEST will host a diverse array of competitions and events - from a robotics contest, a hackathon to a competition on designing unmanned underwater vehicles as well as flying car and self-driving car design competitions.

He added that the rocket race and other events look to attract the younger generations to Turkey's "nationally developed technology movement" and raise new human resources critically needed in the satellite and defense industries.

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