

11 DEC 1996

Sabbaruddin-Car

CABINET APPROVES SPONSORSHIP OF FORMULA-1 TEAM FOR TWO SEASONS

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 11 (Bernama) -- The Cabinet today approved 5.12 million pound sterling (RM20.5 million) a year to sponsor the Stewart-Ford car racing team of Britain in the Formula One world championship for two seasons.

This was announced by Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik.

Malaysia is the first country to be the main sponsor of a Formula-1 team.

The Stewart-Ford team, which has two cars and is owned by former triple world champion Jackie Stewart, will enter the world championship starting with the Grand Prix Australia in Melbourne in March.

One of the Stewart-Ford cars with the "Visit Malaysia" logo prominently displayed on the rear wing and nose cone was unveiled in London yesterday.

Speaking to reporters in his office here, Sabbaruddin said the logo would also be displayed on the front of the driver's jacket and on the crash helmet as well as on the uniform of the Stewart-Ford team crew.

He said the logo would be seen by an annual television audience totalling 6.3 billion people who tune in to Formula-1 races.

"There are 17 Formula-1 races a year and each race is beamed to five continents by 201 television networks which provide a total of 26,400 hours of coverage per race and watched by an average of 367 million viewers," he said.

In addition, a total of 2.4 million people watch the races at the racing circuits each year.

"We can have such vast exposure just by sponsoring only a quarter of the 20 million pound sterling needed to finance a Formula-1 team per season," he said.

The sponsorship agreement was signed here on Nov 26 between Stewart, who is executive chairman of Stewart Grand Prix, and Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Ismail Adam.

The signing was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

National oil corporation, Petronas, earlier agreed to sponsor the Red Bull Sauber racing team for five years beginning this year.

Sabbaruddin said the government sponsorship is part of efforts to promote Malaysia for inclusion in the Formula-1 circuit in 1999.

He said his ministry has held the first meeting with Petronas and Malaysia Airports Berhad (MAB) recently to discuss construction of a racing track for Formula-1 on a 400-hectare site near the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang.

The meeting also discussed the establishment of a Malaysian Formula-1 racing team.

Sabbaruddin said the formation of the team would also involve the Britain-based Lotus car manufacturer now owned by Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd (Proton), Malaysia Airlines (MAS), Malaysian Motorsports Club and Automobile Association of Malaysia (AAM).

"The establishment of a Formula-1 team will require much expenditure and time. I don't think we can establish a team comprising Malaysians by 1999," he said. -- BERNAMA

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