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Sabbaruddin-Formula

GOVERNMENT'S SPONSORING OF FORMULA ONE LAUDABLE

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 27 (Bernama) -- The government has made a good move in entering into a partnership with an internationally-renowned motor racing team and sponsoring it in the 1997 Formula One World Championship.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister, Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said today it was a good programme which could benefit Malaysia as it could help promote and introduce the country through the Steward-Ford cars.

"In the tourism aspect, this is what we want, it is a good programme and the government is prepared to spend money to promote Malaysia through the racing cars," he said when met at his office here.

He was responding to an opposition party's objections to the government's move to sponsor the team during the championship. DAP Deputy secretary-general, Lim Guan Eng, had expressed surprise and wanted the government to explain the returns and benefits before spending RM85 million (20 million pounds) on the motor racing team.

Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said Malaysia would enter into partnership with Steward-Ford Grand prix, owned by three-time world champion Jackie Steward, to introduce Malaysia to the world and this could also help Malaysia learn to develop and design racing car engines.

The "Visit Malaysia" emblem, together with the Malaysian flag, will be featured prominently on the front and rear of the two racing cars that would make their debut at the 17-leg championship starting with the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne, next March.

Dr Mahathir had said the one-year sponsorship would help project Malaysia's image internationally and make it better known all over the world.

Sabbaruddin also clarified that the government would not spend up to RM85 million (20 million pounds) for sponsoring the 1997 Formula One World Championship.

"The DAP has got it all wrong. It may cost that amount to manage a racing team for a one year period but the government is not going to pay everything to the team," he said declining to reveal the actual amount the government was going to pay for the sponsorship.

"If the DAP wants to oppose the move, that is its problem ... the opposition party has always opposed everything we did," he said.

Sabbaruddin said millions of people watched such races every year and this will be a good promotion for Malaysia, which could also gain technical expertise.

"It is like making advertisements through the media but this time it is through racing cars. In the tourism aspect this is what we want and it will benefit us," he added.

Meanwhile engineering experts have said that high performance technology from the Formula One Race was necessary to build up the local automobile industry.

The experts contacted by Bernama said local engineers' involvement in this technology would speed up the transfer of sophisticated and state-of-the-art engine building technology.

"The Formula One Racing technology has been tested particularly that which concerns resilience and effectiveness of engine," Head of the Mechanical Engineering Department, Universiti Malaya, Associate Professor Dr Masjuki Hassan said.

He said the involvement of local engineers in the race would provide invaluable exposure to them particularly in the area of engine design and the technological items used.

Engineering lecturer at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia Associate Professor Dr Shahnor Basri said the time had come for local engineers to design high technology car engines so that the country's dependence on other countries for transfer of technology would be reduced.

He said Malaysia had adequate expertise to acquire this technology up to 100 per cent provided there was a desire and the opportunity.

"We should expand the country's automobile industry so that we'll not just assemble engines produced by other countries," he said.

He also shared Dr Masjuki's view that the number of engineering students majoring in automotive industry should be increased to meet the needs of industry.

Meanwhile a lecturer with the Mechanical Engineering Faculty of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) said local expertise had so far not been tested and the opportunity to work with Formula One engineers would be beneficial.

"We should acknowledge the fact that we still do not have the technology to build engines," said the lecturer who declined to be named.

He expressed the hope that the government's proposal to get local engineers involved with the racing team, which it was sponsoring, would materialise so that Malaysia would emerge within the ranks of world leaders in automobile technology. -- BERNAMA

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