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Mahathir-Circuit

PM VISITS ESTORIL RACING CIRCUIT

By: Syed Jamil Jaafar

LISBON, Sept 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today visited the Estoril grand prix circuit here to have a first-hand look at formula one car racing facilities which Malaysia hopes to also have in a few years.

The Grande Premio de Portugal formula one GP finals will take place at the circuit tomorrow and Dr Mahathir will be in the grandstand to watch the races.

Petronas is sponsoring the Red Bull Sauber team whose drivers, Heinz-Harald Frentzen and Johnny Herbert, are in 11th and 14th positions in the standings after 14 rounds.

The Portuguese GP is the second last leg in the 16-leg world championships

-- the last will be in Japan next month.

Dr Mahathir spent the whole of this morning touring the 4.36km circuit and inspecting the various facilities accompanied by Petronas chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin and Malaysia Airports Berhad chairman Tan Sri Basir Ismail.

Malaysia Airports is developing Malaysia's proposed formula one race track at the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang.

The Prime Minister was briefed by officials from FIA/FISA (the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile/Federation Internationale du Sport Automobile, the ruling bodies of international motorsport) and FOCA (Formula One Constructors' Association -- the race organisers).

Both FOCA and the governing motorsport bodies are said to be keen to expand the formula one championship, which is the ultimate in car racing, in Asia.

At present only Japan is in the circuit in Asia with Malaysia, China and Indonesia now bidding to be the second.

Dr Mahathir's keen interest in the sport as evidenced by his presence here is expected to give Malaysia's bid a big boost. -- BERNAMA

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