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LEAD MAB-Track

MALAYSIA'S FIRST F-1 TRACK TO BE READY BY OCTOBER 1998

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's Formula One (F-1) racing circuit, the world's first "racing circuit in the forest", will be ready by October 1998, Malaysia Airports Berhad managing director Datuk Khairuddin Ibrahim said today.

He said the 5.6-km circuit, with other related facilities built on an area of 900 hectares about 4.5km from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang near here, would cost between RM200 million and RM250 million.

"It will definitely be one of the best in the world," he said after signing a consultancy agreement, on behalf of Malaysia Airports, with two consultancy firms, Iktisas Ingenieurs of Malaysia and well-known German race circuit expert, Tilke Ingenieure Fur Umwelttechnik, at the Prime Minister's Department here.

It was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Malaysia Airports chairman, Tan Sri Basir Ismail.

Khairuddin said the circuit was designed after Malaysia Airports and the consultants studied more than a dozen tracks all over the world before coming up with unique features.

Explaining the features, Iktisas executive chairman Azme Idris said the circuit would boast 16 high speed curves that allow speeding between 90-260 kph with five spots that provide opportunities to overtake and a stadium-like grandstand with the world's only double frontage.

In addition, it would have a spectators' stand closest to the circuit which will bring greater excitement and the world's tallest fountain of 150m, 15 metres higher than the present tallest in Geneva.

The circuit could hold two events at the same time. It also has separate tracks for four-wheel-drive and rally, motorcross and go-cart racing.

The track itself, which cost between RM25 million and RM30 million, will be the widest in the world at 16m.

The circuit could accommodate 130,000 spectators at any one time. Some 30,000 parking lots will be provided.

Dr Mahathir, when asked to comment on the design of the circuit, said: "I have only seen one circuit but I think this is the best in the world."

He said the government would not spend a single sen on the project as it would be fully financed by the project owner, Malaysia Airports.

"But we will collect taxes from their profits," he said adding that the circuit would have the biggest press centre in the world that could gather 800 journalists at any one time.

Meanwhile, Basir said the circuit would be located away from the KLIA flying path and therefore would not affect races or damage the track.

He said Malaysia Airports has drawn up 32 events annually and planned other related facilities such as a business centre, recreational area and hotels to ensure that the construction of the circuit was viable.

Tilke said his company was awarded the consultancy contract for designing the concept of the track based on its vast experience in F-1 race circuit design and other civil engineering projects.

The company was recommended to Malaysia Airports by Formula One Constructors Association (FOCA), the agency that organises F-1 races. The Malaysian circuit will be one of the venue for the F-1 race in 1999 as agreed by the Federation of International Automobile (FIA).

According to a statement released by Malaysia Airports at the ceremony, the project would be commercially viable for Malaysia Airports and would benefit the nation by creating a spin-off effect in terms of technology transfer of advanced automotive industry.

As the F-1 commands extensive coverage by 201 television networks worldwide with audience of 6.3 billion annually, it would certainly promote tourism in Malaysia.

The F-1 racing is a major sports event similar to the Summer Olympics and World Cup Soccer, thus it will place Malaysia on the world map. --
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