

12 DEC 1998

Mahathir-Racing

MAHATHIR AWED BY SEPANG INTERNATIONAL FORMULA ONE RACING CIRCUIT

SEPANG, Dec 12 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is impressed with the new RM286-million Sepang International Circuit (SIC) which is of international standard and among the best in the world.

The Prime Minister said although he had not seen many Formula One racing circuits, the SIC was far better than the Formula One track in Portugal.

He was confident the SIC would gain international recognition as one of the best circuits in the world and attract many world-class racing championships.

He also expressed the hope that one day the champion of the World Formula One Racing Championship would emerge from the SIC.

Dr Mahathir also congratulated the parties responsible to build the 5.542km circuit which could accommodate 130,000 spectators.

The circuit was completed ahead of schedule before the Formula One racing scheduled for October next year, he told reporters after opening the facility.

He congratulated Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Berhad (Proton), the national car manufacturer, for being the first company to use the circuit for the Proton International 300km Merdeka Race.

Dr Mahathir later flagged-off the qualifying rounds of the race.

He said he was confident the circuit would bring in revenue for Malaysia particularly in wooing foreign tourists when international Formula One championships are held there.

"This is crucial for Malaysia's economic growth," said Dr Mahathir, who is also First Finance Minister.

The prime minister said he had been told that the Formula One championship to be held at the SIC in October next year is expected to attract two billion spectators worldwide.

He hoped the spectators would come to Malaysia not only to witness the championship but also visit the various tourist spots in the country.

"In this way, the circuit management can earn income from advertisements and participation of foreign racers," he said.

As to the go-kart circuit at the SIC, Dr Mahathir said it would help youngsters to hone their skills in the sport and keep them away from racing illegally on the roads.

-- BERNAMA

AKT TS