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Boost for Sepang

Randhir Singh

THE Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix on Oct 15-17 may be a private sector initiative but the Government will promote the event and encourage ticket sales.

Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday they will launch the National Motorsports Week on Oct 9 to publicise the Formula One Grand Prix.

"The idea is to generate interest in the Malaysian Grand Prix. It will be an annual event to celebrate the staging of F1 in Malaysia," said Muhyiddin.

Muhyiddin said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will lead a convoy of 400 cars from KLCC to Dataran Merdeka to mark the start of Motorsports Week on Oct 9.

A series of events will be held during the week such as vintage car exhibition and go-kart competitions.

Muhyiddin said Petronas and SIC are aggressive in their marketing and have been fairly successful in ticket sales but more can be done in the weeks ahead.

Sepang International Circuit (SIC) general manager Hussin Mohamad Ali said as of yesterday, 49,000 tickets have been sold.

"Our capacity is 92,000. We hope to touch the figure by Oct 17," said Hussin.

Hussin said past experience has shown that ticket sales, as for the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games, tend to pick up as the event approaches.

"By the time the event gets going, it would be a sellout. We are hoping for the same scenario."

Hussin said 34,000 uncovered seats ranging from RM350 to RM500 for the three-day event are still available. Also available are US\$2,000 (RM7,600) grandstand seats.

"There are some cancellations for the grandstand. They are not many and locals fans can buy them."

He said hillside seats costing RM150 for one day and RM250 for three days are available as well.

Tickets are sold at the Sepang F1 Circuit daily from 9.0am to 11.0pm, including Sundays. Tickets are also available at selected Petronas Kedai Mesra outlets and at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang and the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang.

Hussin dismissed suggestions that unsold tickets would be distributed free.

"It will not be done. It would be unfair to those who have bought tickets."

Hussin said preparations are proceeding well, including Press accreditation.

SIC were embroiled in controversies in recent months. First, their Chief Operating Officer Datuk Ahmad Bakri Shabdin resigned.

Then, the Proton 300km Merdeka Race on Aug 29 ended in controversy when the organisers could not post the results due to a computer glitch. A few days later, some key staff of their Communication Department resigned.

But despite these problems, Hussin assured that everything is on track at the SIC.

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