

14 OCT 1999

Mahathir-Motor

MOTORSPORTS CAN ENHANCE M'SIA'S ENGINEERING CAPABILITIES, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- Active domestic promotion of motorsports should help enhance Malaysia's automotive engineering capabilities and in designing race cars of international reckoning, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

While expressing this hope, the prime minister envisaged that more Malaysians would take up motorsports seriously and graduate into becoming Formula One racers.

"The automotive field is not confined to merely car production or engineering as cars also serve recreational and sporting purposes," Dr Mahathir said when opening the KL Motorsports Show '99 at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

The government would like to see systematic and orderly involvement of Malaysian youths in motorsports, he said.

"We're aware that midnight illegal motorcycle races are organised on the highways offering prizes which can't afford to give, but we hope properly run motorsports can help minimise undesirable activities," Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister urged youngsters to channel their youthful energies and enthusiasm to healthier activities and use these occasions to test their riding or driving skills and competence to attain the Formula 3000 level and graduate to F1 races.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had advanced considerably in the automotive field from being just a car-importing nation.

Although gradual, he, said, Malaysia had transformed into a car-assembling and a car-manufacturing country and was now capable of designing and testing own engines.

The prime minister said he was grateful that Malaysia was picked as another F1 race venue although many other Asian countries desired to host the world's greatest motor-racing event.

"Motorsports helps put Malaysia on the world map and attract commerce and tourists to Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir called for more diversified motorsports programmes be drawn up so that a larger segment of Malaysians in various age groups could take part.

Dr Mahathir spent an hour visiting the various booths and unveiled a model of Malaysia's own hand-made Bufori sports car manufactured by Bufori Motor Car Company (M) Sdn Bhd.

The prime minister also officially launched the Simex Rainforest Challenge 1999, an international rough terrain motoring expedition in Malaysia from Nov 28 to Dec 8.

Dr Mahathir obliged to pose for 10 minutes for local caricaturists Don and Zalli to sketch him upon the prime minister's launching of their project called "Million Faces of Caricature".

-- BERNAMA

AFY HS RYN