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Praises all round for a race well run

Lokman Mansor

MALAYSIA successfully hosted the Petronas Malaysian Formula One Grand Prix at the Sepang F1 Circuit yesterday and in doing so set the benchmark for other races in the circuit.

The Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix, the first Formula One race to be held in Asia outside Japan, won praises for being superbly organised.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told reporters that he is happy with the response from participants and spectators of the inaugural F1 race in Malaysia.

"This proves that even though Malaysia is a developing country, if we put all our efforts together and work hard to show our capabilities, the end result can outdo any event held in developed countries," he said.

Abdullah said the Grand Prix will benefit both the tourism and automotive industries.

"When our nation develops and there are gains made from hosting the F1 race, then the Government will have many facilities and these will benefit those in rural areas," he said.

Organising committee chairman Tan Sri Basir Ismail said the Malaysian spectators played an important part in the success of the event, and thanked them for their support.

"The successful organisation of the First Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix will lend genuine credibility to Kuala Lumpur's candidature as host city of the Olympic Games in 2008," he added.

Earlier yesterday morning, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad rode in a Rolls-Royce and led the F1 drivers around the Sepang F1 Circuit in a parade of vintage cars. This was followed by the official launch of the Malaysian Grand Prix and a track display of the classic "Silver Arrows" racing cars from Mercedes Benz.

The opening ceremony also saw a parade of Petronas Motorsports cars and motorcycles, a military acrobatic motorcycle show, freefall parachutists, and a spectacular flypast by FA-18 jet fighters of the Royal Malaysian Air Force.

The spectators were then treated to a "Colours of Malaysia" cultural show, a performance by the military band and a display of the Jalur Gemilang, Malaysia's national flag.

Bernama reports: The International Automobile Federation (FIA) has lauded Malaysia for the superb organisation of the inaugural Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix.

Sepang International Circuit (SIC) managing director Hussin Mohamed Ali said FIA race director Charlie Whiting felt that Malaysia had emerged as among the best organisers of a Formula One World Championship.

"Whiting praised us for our organisational ability as Argentina and Brazil, for instance, took five years to become organisers like Malaysia," he told reporters after the Grand Prix.

Hussin said the response from the public to the event was most encouraging although tickets sales were initially slow. The total revenue from ticket sales was RM40 million and the organisers earned another RM30 million from sponsorships.

"The crowd was estimated to be nearly 80,000. At the grandstand, there were 32,275 people, including a lot of foreigners," he said.

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