

17 OCT 1999

Mahathir-F1

SEPANG RACE WILL BRING BENEFITS- DR MAHATHIR

By: Hamdan Saaid

SEPANG, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the hosting of the Formula One race at the Sepang F1 Circuit here will bring benefits to Malaysians of all income groups including the poor.

Anything that helped to develop the country would have a spin-off effect on the people including the poor as there would be increased investments, tourism and other such benefits, he said.

"Previously Malaysia was not known to many...but holding the motor race...the Formula I.. here the world knows where our country is and there will be greater interest to visit and spend money in Malaysia," he told reporters after opening the race.

The exposure Malaysia received from this race was more valuable than the millions of ringgit invested on advertisements, Dr Mahathir said.

Foreigners the worldover would have seen Malaysia on their TV screens including the "The Right Formula Malaysia, Petronas Malaysia, the Jalur Gemilang and this race has projected our country in the eyes of the world," he said.

"The Jordan Mugen-Honda Team Manager Eddie Jordan mentioned how impressed he was about Malaysia and he regretted the bad press the country has received from sections of the foreign press," Dr Mahathir said.

"Jordan wondered why he did not hear anything good at all about Malaysia as he did not see anything bad here, everything appeared fine to him."

The Prime Minister said that he never dreamt of seeing the FI Race in Malaysia let alone receiving praise from all sections of the motorsport fraternity, from the competitors, team managers and the International Automobile Federation (FIA).

"I am thankful the race went off well and there was no untoward incident. All those whom I met were satisfied with the organisation here and congratulated all those involved," he said.

The experience gained from this championship should be used in the planning and organising of other races in the future, he added.

Dr Mahathir said the discipline of the professional FI competitors should serve as an example to Malaysian athletes, who like them, should strive to attain success at international level.

"I see that racing people like Schumacher (Michael) and Hakkinen (Mika) are very well disciplined. In view of this they can win. However when we achieve even a small victory we tend to lose our discipline," he said.

The Prime Minister said an indisciplined community was unlikely to attain success and advised young children particularly those who were still studying to realise the importance of discipline.

"The Government can do everything, build this track, put up other projects but if there is no discipline, sorrylah," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that after the FI race, the Sepang FI circuit would be upgraded and used for other motorsports activities such as go-kart and 4x4 car race as the circuit was not built just for the FI.

-- BERNAMA

HRS AAM