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Mahathir-Circuit

SEPANG F-1 CIRCUIT A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY FOR M'SIA, SAYS MAHATHIR

SEPANG, March 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that the Sepang International Circuit will complement Malaysia's rapidly growing automotive industry and also become a centre for motorsports development for the country and the region.

The prime minister said research and development was an important part of the automotive industry and the racing as well as the circuit could become a centre for this.

He said the track, which from now would be known as the Sepang F-1 Circuit, would also complement the extensive development of the Sepang area which already boasts the KL International Airport, the new federal administrative centre Putrajaya and the country's first intelligent city Cyberjaya, among others.

"I know some may question the rationale behind building such a racing facility at times like this but if they were to consider the benefits we will gain, they will realise what a fantastic opportunity this is," he said when opening the RM286 million circuit, here.

He said Malaysia had a weather which, unlike some parts of the world, is always hot -- a condition that is good for testing all kinds of engines as well as the endurance of drivers.

Dr Mahathir also said it would be cheaper for the foreign teams to base themselves here.

He said the attention of some two billion people from over 200 countries would be focused on Malaysia when it hosted the Formula One (F1) racing in October.

"For a good hour and a half, all eyes will be on our country. If we work out the cost of one minute of advertising on television and multiply it by 90, we can get some idea of the advertising value this circuit will give us.

"And from these two billion people watching this event live, there will surely be a sizeable number of them who will want to visit our country. This will certainly boost the country's tourism industry," he said.

The prime minister said the F-1 race would once again showcase Malaysia's ability to organise world class sporting events which included the successful 16th Commonwealth Games last year.

He said the Sepang circuit was yet another example of the country's ability to develop a world standard sporting facility and that he had been told that the circuit had set the standard for all future circuits in the world.

"This is why the Sepang circuit has been given the privilege to use the official Formula One logo in its name," he said, adding that it was a great honour for Malaysia as no other circuit in the world had been accorded this privilege.

For this, Dr Mahathir thanked Formula One Administration Limited chairman Bernie Ecclestone.

He also said Malaysians could be proud of the fact that it took 15 months to complete the track, which in itself a record.

"Malaysians are practical dreamers. They dreamt of holding a Formula One race in Malaysia. They did not go on sleeping and dreaming.

"With their usual pragmatism, they planned and built this circuit even as they negotiated to bring the race here," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had been kept informed about the construction

progress of the circuit which would have cost more if planned and built after the devaluation of the ringgit.

-- BERNAMA

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