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There's more to it than just burning tyres at Sepang

Anthony Raj

THE three-day product launch by Caltex Singapore at the Sepang International Circuit (SIC) later this month caps a successful season for the track owners who gained worldwide exposure when they hosted the Petronas Malaysian Formula One Grand Prix.

"Caltex Singapore have, for their launch on Dec 11-13, invited 140 media men from the Asia Pacific region," said SIC general manager Husin Ali in Sepang on Wednesday.

The number of media men may not be as much those who turned up for the Malaysian GP, part of the world Formula One championship, but nevertheless it is a considerable large number for a specific one-product event.

Aside the obvious returns for Caltex and for SIC who charge a minimum RM40,000 a day (RM42,000 for Saturday and RM45,000 for Sunday), the returns are two-fold for the country.

A minimum three-day stay in Kuala Lumpur will be necessary for those involved in the launch - hosts Caltex and invited media men and others - and this spells foreign exchange for the country.

Even if the media men have not anything immediate to report about the facilities at Sepang or the country on the whole but the Caltex launch, their visit nevertheless will serve them well when they do write about Malaysia in the future.

SIC, who were incorporated on Jan 23, 1998, began operations based at the Malaysia Airports Berhad headquarters in Petaling Jaya.

Staffed by 11, the team officially moved into the Sepang circuit on Jan 31, 1999. But despite being in business for just about a year, they have come a long way since then.

It is not just the Malaysian GP in October or the Caltex launch, that had been keeping SIC relatively busy since they got started in December of 1998.

They hosted the first Proton Merdeka Race and followed up with the East Asia Proseche Parade that attracted about 300 cars from the region, including Hong Kong.

The International Racing Team Association (IRTA) conducted official testing for their members in February and March and the Sepang F1 Circuit was officially launched in March by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Toyota of Japan had a three-day launch of their Lexus in March.

July saw the two-day launching of the Ferrari Modena followed by the Proton International Merdeka Race in August.

The launching of the BMW 3-series over three days attracted over 2,500 enthusiasts and potential buyers from the region.

And they have another full programme for the coming season as they get more in motor sports and motor-related product launches and events.

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