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Exposed to 300 million

ALMOST 300 million people viewed last year's Petronas Malaysian Formula One Grand Prix, thrusting Malaysia into the limelight as a centre for sports excellence.

Statistics released by Formula One Management, the rights holder for the F1 World Championship, revealed that 298,851,046 people from 126 countries viewed the event either through live and delayed telecasts or programme highlights.

Overall, there were 55,861 minutes of worldwide broadcast, making the RM120 million Formula One race in Malaysia a highly effective investment, according to a Sepang International Circuit (SIC) statement.

To add spice to it, an impact survey conducted by Universiti Malaya had concluded the 1999 Malaysian Grand Prix had generated revenue of about RM500 million to Malaysia based on the spending of the spectators, officials and teams in the event.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the prime mover behind Malaysia's Formula One event, had repeatedly said the event was a national motorsports agenda to project the national image overseas and boost domestic tourism.

Spurred by the success of the inaugural event, SIC chairman Tan Sri Basir Ismail has set a target of RM1 billion in foreign exchange earning for the 2000 Petronas Malaysian GP and a target of 100,000 spectators.

Apart from emphasising a stronger promotion campaign locally and overseas, SIC are expanding the covered area to 75,000 seats and building a new area called Sepang F1 Village, which will provide areas for merchandising and entertainment, food and beverage stalls for the spectators before and after the practices and the actual race.

Malaysia will host the final leg of this year's F1 World Championship at the Sepang F1 Circuit in Sepang on Oct 20-22.

\* BEING a big fan of Max Biaggi and the Marlboro Yamaha Racing team finally paid off for Oh Teik Peng, who won a Yamaha Virago 250cc motorcycle for the best slogan in the Malaysian Motorcycle Grand Prix Challenge contest.

Oh, a regular participant in contests, didn't take long to impress the panel of judges with his slogan.

"My favourite team in the Malaysian Motorcycle GP is Marlboro Yamaha because they push speed to the `Max' to be first past the `Checa' flag," was the 36-year-old teacher's prize-winning slogan.

"I have won several prizes from contests but this is the first time that I've won a bike.

"I still like my old 70cc bike and I plan to sell my prize since my driving licence does not allow me to ride bikes bigger than 125cc," said Oh, who had won a trip to the United States two years.

The three first prize winners of the Yamaha SRE102 Electric motorcycle were Mohamed Sakhaf Saad, Hamimah Karim and Azamhar Abu Bakar.

(END)