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Maniam the man

Zakri Baharudin; Radzi Sapiee

S. SUBRAMANIAM, a familiar figure in the local motorsports scene, will fill the hot seat as Clerk-of-Course for the Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix at the Sepang F1 Circuit on Oct 20-22.

SIC general manager Azmi Murad said the Automobile Association of Malaysia (AAM) have appointed Subramaniam as Clerk-of-Course for this year's race.

"Maniam (Subramaniam) is very experienced in motorsports and we are confident he will do a good job for the Formula One," said Azmi in Sepang yesterday.

Jeff Amin, another experienced figure in motorsports, was tipped to fill the post earlier.

"Jeff is now working with us (SIC) as consultant for race management, so he'll be busy helping us manage the race," added Azmi.

Apart from Subramaniam and Jeff, local motorsports officials who have the credentials to play the role of Clerk-of-Course are Paul David, Asni Taib and Harvey Yap.

Last year, David was appointed as Clerk-of-Course, whose job covers safety and medical facilities, preparation of marshalls and scrutineering.

The main task of the Clerk-of-Course is to convince F1 race director Charlie Whiting of the FIA that everything is in place and up to standard.

\* DEPUTY Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will launch the National Motorsports Month on Saturday to coincide with the 2000 Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix later this month.

Abdullah is filling in for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who will be abroad till next week.

The Sports Ministry, organisers of the event, said Abdullah would launch the event at Dataran Merdeka in the evening.

"A host of activities would be available for Malaysians to get into the mood. Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein is among the VIPs who will be there," said a Ministry official yesterday. However, the itinerary is not available.

The Ministry had earlier declared October as National Motorsports Month with more than 30 motoring events to be held nationwide.

Among the events are the Malaysian tour expedition, car and motor shopping carnivals and Formula One cars exhibition.

The event is not only expected to get Malaysians into Formula One frenzy but to entertain an anticipated influx of tourists to the Malaysian GP on Oct 20-22.

This year, motor racing fans who follow the Formula One circus around the world are expected to remain longer in the country as the Malaysian leg is the last in the world championship.

Last year, more than 50,000 foreigners turned up for the inaugural Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix and this gave the country some RM500 million in foreign exchange although many stayed for only three days before leaving for the season's closing in Japan.

Among the activities that could thrill fans is a street demonstration by Sauber-Petronas drivers, Pedro Diniz of Brazil and Mika Salo of Finland, who will rev their 800hp speed machines at Penang's famous Padang Kota next week.

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