

Take the lead, PM urges private sector

STAR

19 MAR 2001

SEPANG The private sector should take the lead in promoting major events such as the Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

I think we (should) leave it to the private sector. You know the Government is a very retiring kind of government.

We don't like to project ourselves too much. I think the private sector is much more competent, he said at a press conference at the close of the race.

He said the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry would like to work closely with the Sepang International Circuit, the race organiser and those involved in motorsports.

Recently Sepang International Circuit chairman Tan Sri Basir Ismail proposed that a high level committee be formed to streamline efforts to promote events of national interest such as the Grand Prix.

Basir's comment was made in the wake of poor ticket sales compared to last year.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was willing to support and encourage people who are keen to promote motorsports.

He said the Formula One race had done a lot to raise world awareness about Malaysia since the country began hosting it in 1999.

Dr Mahathir said feedback from the teams had been posi-

tive, adding that they regarded the circuit as one of the best and the race well organised.

The same comment was received in the first year and more in the second year and today too they were very positive.

Dr Mahathir said the earlier decision by SIC not to telecast the race live was because it was trying to attract more people to buy tickets to the race in view of the poor sales.

But I think it wasn't necessary after all. I think people would have come anyway. Some people get a kick out of watching it on TV but others would pay to see the real thing.

The race was aired live over TV3 yesterday.

In his message in the official programme for the Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix, Dr Mahathir said the interest generated by Formula One would spur the growth of motorsports in the country.

He said this would not only benefit sports enthusiasts but also the domestic automotive industry.

In two years, the Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix has elevated Malaysia's involvement in motorsports and put it firmly on the international motor sports calendar, he said.

Dr Mahathir added that Malaysia's image would continue to grow positively because of the huge publicity which followed the event throughout its 17 rounds.