

It's KL Minardi Asiatech

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By **R. Manirajan**

PUTRAJAYA, Sat: The European Minardi Formula One team will now be known as "KL Minardi Asiatech" next season.

The name will be incorporated with plans by the government for a worldwide campaign to promote Kuala Lumpur as a tourism and business destination.

The campaign's key marketing partners will be the Minardi racing team.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr

Mahathir Mohamad said this is the next stage in the government's strategy to promote Malaysia to the world, with KL as the gateway and using motorsport as a primary vehicle.

"We have enjoyed marked success in building the awareness and image of our country through various racing-related programmes since 1995," said Mahathir.

"Now we are turning to motorsport again to assist in direct development of inward investment by creating a platform for Malaysian companies, destina-

tions and events to reach potential customers around the world."

This was conveyed by Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein at a press conference after a meeting with the Prime Minister and Australian aviation magnate, Paul Stoddart, who is the owner and principal of the Italian-based Minardi F1 team at his office here.

He said the meeting involved discussions on driver development, link-up with Minardi with regards to technology and engines as well as identifying potential

drivers and the new image of the car which will be more Malaysian.

Hishammuddin and Stoddart confirmed that Alex Yoong will drive for Minardi next season to the Prime Minister.

Stoddart said Alex is undergoing an intense training programme including fitness work.

On the campaign, Hishammuddin said as the marketing use of motorsport is becoming more focused with the KL campaign, programmes will be created to inspire talents from our youth in what is a highly technological and

competitive environment.

"We will nurture not just young drivers but also engineers at the graduate, technical, degree and vocational levels," he said.

Meanwhile, Stoddart said the team are looking forward to representing KL and Malaysia to F1's worldwide audience.

He added that KL has a tremendous amount to offer.

"With 350 million TV viewers for each race and events in 15 countries on five continents, we know we can get that message across," he said.