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F1 the new vehicle to promote KL

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PUTRAJAYA, Sat. - A worldwide campaign to promote the nation's capital as a tourism, business and sports destination will see the Minardi Formula One motor racing team renamed KL Minardi Asiatech for the 2002 season.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today this was part of a strategy to promote Malaysia to the world, with Kuala Lumpur 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," Dr Mahathir said in a statement released after he met Paul Stoddart, the principal of the Italian-based Minardi F1 team.

Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein announced the name for the F1 team at a Press conference and also confirmed that Alex Yoong would be driving for the Minardi F1 team during his first full season next year.

Stoddart said Minardi looked forward to representing Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia to F1's worldwide audience, reminiscing that on his first visit here he immediately recognised it as "an incredibly dynamic, world-class city".

"KL has a tremendous amount to offer, as does the rest of this beautiful country. Everything is done with a style and attitude which combines the best of traditional and modern Asia. And everyone should experience it.

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