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Mahathir happy with UIM success

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday expressed satisfaction over Malaysia's ability to host international sporting events such as the UIM Formula One powerboat championship to promote the country.

The Prime Minister said he had received positive feedback the season-opening Formula One race, held at Tanjung Puteri, Johor Baru over the weekend, was among the best organised races on the circuit.

He said this race and the Malaysian Formula One Grand Prix in Sepang have won international praise for excellent organisation.

"Today alone, Malaysia is seen by over 500 million people all over the world. This means there is good publicity for Malaysia," he told reporters after the event yesterday.

Dr Mahathir expressed confidence in the organisers' ability to garner corporate sponsorship for international races such as the F1 race in Sepang and the Tour de Langkawi cycling race if the benefits of such events were attractive.

"We find that large corporations in Malaysia are very keen on supporting these activities. If they benefit in terms of advertising (among others), I think there will be more sponsors."

However, he rapped hotels for indiscriminately raising charges during international events without providing any significant contribution to making the event a success.

Dr Mahathir said he was considering imposing `some kind of levy' on hotels for raising room charges which adversely affected attendance figures at such events.

"Those who get the direct benefits are the hotels and others (in the tourism industry). But we find that hotels raise their room charges without any contribution whatsoever ... this will take its toll on the attendance."

Dr Mahathir said there was also a need to sponsor Malaysian teams in Formula One competitions. Only one Malaysian took part this year.

"We need to see how we can finance (the teams). We have to finance them because they have to spend a lot of time racing and to travel a lot," he said.

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