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Fighting the good fight of faith

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THE task of saving the Batu Tiga Circuit may be monumental, which is why its campaigners and the motorsports industry will be seeking the assistance of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to help their cause.

The campaigners will submit a petition to Dr Mahathir when they have garnered enough support.

Kick-starting it yesterday was the Kedah Motorsports Club (KMC) who were the first to submit its petition.

International Motorcycling Federation (FIM) medical commission vice president Dr K. Kanagalingam said the KMC's petition was handed to him yesterday while more clubs are expected to follow suit over the next few days.

"We are just waiting for them to file their petitions before we hand it to the Prime Minister," said Dr Kanagalingam yesterday.

Although Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo had on Wednesday made clear that a huge amount of money is needed to keep circuit alive, the motorsports fraternity is more than willing to fight to the end.

"As the Menteri Besar said, it will be very difficult, but we aren't giving up yet. We will wait for everyone to submit their petitions or letters of support and then we can only hope for the best," he added.

Dr Mohd Khir revealed on Wednesday that the myriad problems faced by the Selangor State Development Board (PKNS) in maintaining the circuit has forced them (PKNS) to redevelop the area.

The circuit's management, Batu Tiga Speedway Circuit (BTSC), having failed to settle its rent and taxes since taking over in 1998, has contributed to a total of RM25 million in losses for PKNS.

Also, Dr Mohd Khir said, the land the circuit occupies, would be part of a mammoth joint venture involving PKNS and contractors which would result in a RM300 million profit for the Government, thus making it far less viable for the circuit to remain.

This too, said Dr Mohd Khir, would make it very expensive for prospective candidates to take over the circuit, although the Government could consider applications.

Support for the campaign, which now involves the FIM, the German Motorcycling Federation (DMSB), the Perlis Motor Sports Club (PMSC), the Kedah Motorsports Club (KMC), the Royal Perak Motorsports Club (RPMC), the Penang Motorsports Club (PMC) and the Automobile Association of Malaysia (AAM), must now be coupled with plans which can convince the Selangor Government of these factors.

Although the money can be raised, the situation will now bring to light the commitment of those involved in saving the circuit, as the Selangor Government would also like to see how the Batu Tiga circuit can serve motorsports in tandem with the world class Sepang circuit.

Over the past three months, the divide in Malaysian motorsports has been evident, and now, the country awaits a vision of sorts, on how three circuits (inclusive of the J-Circuit in Pasir Gudang) in the country can prove fruitful for their aspirations in motorsports.

If Japan can have 19 circuits, large and small, and the United Kingdom with 37 of all sizes, then Malaysia should prove to the world that there is enough interest in motorsport and move forward, firstly by preserving

existing motorsports infrastructure.

But then again, money is always the object.