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Yahya: `Malaysian F1 GP can only get better with time'

Arnaz M. Khairul

MANY described the recent Formula One Powerboat Malaysian Grand Prix at the Mines Resort City in Seri Kembangan as a success, but one man, organisers H2O Sports' managing director Datuk Yahya Abdul Jalil, feels more can be achieved.

While thanking the Government and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his keen interest and support during the event, Yahya said preparations for next year's event are already in place which includes some interesting plans.

"The support and words of encouragement during the event will steer us further. We especially wish to thank the Prime Minister for his attention during the event," said Yahya.

"Since we were said to be in pole position for the best organiser award, we must look into how we are going to sustain the standard. We are already preparing for the next three years.

"Taking note of all the comments, there are a lot of areas which we can improve with the support from all parties. We should look at this as a national event," said Yahya.

As such, said Yahya, primary plans are for the improvement of existing infrastructure including roads leading to the Mines Resort City which should be made more accesible to the public.

"In this area, we need the support from the Selangor Government. This should be made an event to promote the State. We are already looking into cooperation with the Sports Ministry and the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry.

"I have also had talks with Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew, who is the owner of the Mines Resort City, on a collaborative effort for the event," said Yahya.

On the talks with Lee, Yahya said, plans were to erect permanent structures for powerboat racing in surrounding areas and to dedicate certain parts of the lake for Formula One events.

"We have started work on promoting next year's race in order to create more public awareness. We have also started looking at the concept for next year's event," said Yahya.

The 2001 event which was held off Tanjung Puteri in Johor, was a crowd puller due to the various support events held in the vicinity which served up a Malaysian-styled carnival atmosphere.

Being held in such an area also served to attract a crowd of 200,000 over two days last year, due to the easy access of the race venue at Tanjung Puteri but this year's organiser's tally, recorded a crowd of just 50,000.

"We must look at this as a sporting event. In other places, the sport itself will attract enthusiasts but here, we are looking to attract the population at large and we mean people from all walks of life," said Yahya.

With such plans, next year's event is expected to feature a carnival atmosphere which includes cultural shows and local food fares, which Yahya said will feature only the best stalls from all over the country.

The event may also incorporate some extreme sports. Also, among those interested is the Malaysia Volleyball Association (Mava), who could hold a beach volleyball tournament along the shores of the lake.

"We are looking into increasing the content of the event and we are hoping for support from all parties be it the Government, corporate bodies

or the public. The hardware, which is the Formula One race, is already there. Now we must look into increasing the software," said Yahya.