

Formula One not stopping for elections

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PETALING JAYA: Organisers of the 2004 Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix are not slowing down their pace for the upcoming Formula 1 race despite the date-clash with the general election.

"There is no question over the race being postponed," said Sepang International Circuit (SIC) press officer Azhar Chazali.

"It will go on, since the International Automobile Federation has fixed it in the F1 calendar," he told The Star yesterday.

"All the arrangements, including for TV stations worldwide, have been made," he added.

The F1 season will open this Sunday in Melbourne, Australia. Malaysia will host the second leg of the 19-race season from March 19 to 21.

The three-day event will consist of a free

practice session on Friday followed by the qualifying on Saturday and race day the following day.

Ferrari driver Michael Schumacher will be battling it out this year for his seventh world title. He broke all records last year after clinching his sixth world championship.

McLaren's Kimi Raikkonen won in Sepang last year with Ferrari's Rubens Barichello coming in second and Renault's Fernando Alonso third. Schumacher finished sixth.

In view of the polls, Azhar said that SIC would review strategies to make sure its target of drawing 120,000 spectators is met.

SIC chairman Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir will reveal the strategies at a press conference here on Monday, he said, adding: "We are optimistic that the target can be met."

Azhar said it was important for the nation that both the general election and the race went on smoothly and successfully.