

# Security to be tightened for M'sian Grand Prix

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Security personnel will be on high alert to prevent any attempts by political parties to disrupt the Formula One Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix on March 21, which is also polling day.

Sepang International Circuit (SIC) chairman Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir said security would be on the lookout for spectators carrying flags or placards of political parties.

Malaysia is hosting the second leg of the 18-round race from March 19 to 21. The three-day event involves a free practice session on March 19, the qualifier on March 20 and the race day on March 21.

Hundreds of international journalists and foreign dignitaries are expected to be present.

"Campaigning stops on election day, so we expect members of political parties to leave their political bias at the main gate and enjoy the race," Mokhzani told reporters at the SIC here yesterday.

On strategies to counter a potential drop in the number of spectators because of the polls, he said SIC planned to increase ticket sales in neighbouring countries, especially Singapore, where it hoped to double the 8,500 tickets sold last year.

To date, he added, some 25,000 tickets had been sold and he expected a 15% increase in total sales through a 5% reduction in prices this year.

"Ticket sales have been increasing every year. Last year, there were 101,000 spectators. This year, we expect 120,000," he said.

A special package that includes a return train ticket from KL Sentral to KL International Airport and shuttle bus transfer to the circuit is available to F1 ticket holders for RM55. For details, call 03-2267 8000.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is expected to attend the event on race day.