

17 JAN 2004
Sports-F1 (Launch)
ALL SYSTEMS GO FOR A HOT, FIERY M'SIAN GP

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 17 (Bernama) -- The 2004 Petronas Malaysian Formula One (F1) Grand Prix is set to be a hot and electrifying affair with a grand campaign launched with great aplomb at the Kuala Lumpur City Centre here tonight.

The campaign, by sponsors Petronas and Sepang International Circuit (SIC), was launched by Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein. Also present was Petronas chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin and SIC chairman Datuk Mokhzani Tun Dr Mahathir.

In his speech, Hishammuddin called on all parties to make this year's event more memorable than the last and to learn from visiting F1 teams how to better promote the motorsports culture in the country.

"After five years of being the perfect hosts, I cannot deny that we have reached tremendous improvements in terms of organisational skills and underlying infrastructure.

"As we strive to progress as a technology-driven nation, parallel development of talented drivers has got to be looked into by developing further the motorsports culture here," he said.

The 2004 race, to be held at the Sepang F1 Circuit from March 19 to 21, will see even greater coordinated efforts by all parties in promotions as well as development programmes in the local motorsports industry.

Title sponsors Petronas will kick off their campaign with the informative nationwide F1 Tech Tour programme, which will focus more in Sabah and Sarawak this year.

Already making its round since Jan 12, the mobile interactive exhibition kiosk features the latest Sauber Petronas F1 race car, an F1 V10 engine, information and display area, three interactive information kiosks and an integrated audio console.

Aimed at increasing F1 awareness and cultivating interest among Malaysians in the sport, the 55-foot long custom-built trailer will

focus

on educational programmes at selected schools in the two Borneo states until July.

Petronas will also continue its aim of bringing F1 onto the streets by organising the annual F1 Demo in Kuching on March 14 with Sauber Petronas' latest F1 race car, the C23, running within the vicinity of the picturesque Kuching Waterfront.

As for SIC, despite last year's record-breaking attendance of 101,485 spectators, they are not taking things easy and have set an increased target of 120,000 spectators including 50,000 international fans.

With comprehensive international and domestic promotions, including close working relationships with Tourism Malaysia and Malaysia Airlines to promote the event, Mokhzani said he was confident of achieving the target.

"As we are the hosts for the second leg of the 18-leg World Championship, we don't see how anyone can spoil the market as Shanghai and Bahrain will organise their first ever F1 races after the Malaysian leg," he said.

Earlier, Hishammuddin unveiled a new Grand Prix monument to serve as a symbol of the ongoing promotional activities which will peak during the F1 race weekend itself.

Featuring a globe covered by the famed Sepang "mushroom" stand, the monument, which towered over the dignitaries, will be on display at the KLCC Esplanade until the end of March.

-- BERNAMA

HRS HM EMK