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Formula One should be perfect 10

ONE of the many abiding achievements Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will leave behind when he steps down as Prime Minister in October is to have the foresight to bring Formula One Grand Prix racing to Malaysia.

It has put our country on the map - and not just in racing. The splendid Sepang circuit is seen on TV screens across the world, the name Petronas emblazoned like a distinguished coat of arms.

It truly showcases Malaysia, an event we can truly be proud of, which makes the country known all over the world, and brings people to visit.

I remember standing in line at the buffet behind two obviously wealthy lady visitors to our country in one of the hospitality suites in Sepang in 1999, and overhearing their conversation, which went something like this:

Lady One: "And where are you going after this?"

Second lady: "Vee are going to Langawee."

Lady One: "Where are you staying in Langawee?"

Second lady: "Vee are staying at the Dataai."

First lady: "Oh, vee are also going to Langawee, but vee are staying at Andamaaan."

Well, they can name drop all they want, as long as they come to our country, spend their money and enjoy our delights.

We have to make sure we keep standards up to attract the kind of people to spend that kind of money.

All the events surrounding today's big race should also be of a class that is comparable to Grand Prix racing and the people who accompany it.

The Gala Dinner, for instance, should be of first-class international quality, be it in food and drink, or music accompanying dinner which should not, for example, be so loud as to inhibit conversation.

The Malaysian Grand Prix at Sepang is a precious national asset which should be preserved and protected like a jewel in the crown for all the good things it brings to the country.