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Sepang all revved up for the big party

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SEPANG is more prepared for the fifth edition of the Petronas Formula One Malaysian Grand Prix than it was for the previous four editions.

And this, said Sepang International Circuit (SIC) general manager Ahmad Mustafa, is due to the organisers' early preparations and that they have taken nothing for granted.

Ticket sales for the biggest annual motorsports event have also peaked with 70 percent of the targetted 100,000 tickets already picked up by racing fans.

"We are striving to be the best-organised race, thus we prepared early for this year's race. We have also had time to improve on various areas and make it more comfortable for the teams," said Ahmad.

To improve the circuit's artistic value, some of Sepang's buildings have been repainted specially for this weekend's race and so have the kerbs on the race tracks. A new lighting system has also been installed which makes for impressive scenery at night.

The pits, said Ahmad, have been improved through application of a "garden concept", which gives the teams and drivers some space to relax.

"We have also worked on increasing spectator comfort by improving public transport with the help of the various authorities. We have got tremendous cooperation from police and we can assure the public of clear roads leading to and out of the circuit."

"We've got good support from Petronas and DBKL and this makes the job easier. We also expect good coverage from RTM as the host broadcaster although it will be the first time they are involved with F1," said Ahmad.

As for protocol, explained Ahmad, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will present the winner's trophy.

Previously, there had been some misunderstandings when Automobile Association of Malaysia (AAM) chairman Tunku Datuk Mudzaffar Tunku Mustapha was not among those who presented the prizes on the podium.

He will now present the third-placing prize, while the first two prizes will be presented by the head of State or his representatives and the constructors prize, by sponsors.