

**Najib launches Malaysia's own F1 team**  
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**Wong Teck Chi**

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today announced that Malaysia will participate in the FIA Formula One world championship through its own racing team - 1Malaysia F1 Team, starting from 2010.

Najib said that the Formula One Federation (FIA) has accepted Malaysia's bid to enter the 2010 and future championships.

The premier said that the 1Malaysia F1 team was a government and private initiative, combining the collaborative experience of Proton and Lotus.

He said the team was supported by world-class expertise, and backed by the Sepang international circuit, Motorsports Association of Malaysia as well as Automobile Association of Malaysia.

Speaking to reporters at Ministry of Finance in Putrajaya, Najib said the Malaysian F1 team will be based at the Sepang circuit with pit stop staff coming from Malaysia.

"It will be a Malaysia manufactured car," said a proud Najib, adding that a race to find a suitable Malaysian driver was underway.

**Six drivers shortlisted**

A statement issued during the press release stated that the team will reveal its two drivers by Oct 31. At present, six local and international drivers have been shortlisted for evaluation.

Najib was also asked on the reason to join the F1 race at the present situation where the global economic outlook was not too good.

To this, Najib said the project was a private initiative and will expose Proton and Lotus to the world stage.

"It will make sure our brands are stronger and recognised by the world," he said.

He added that the government's participation in the project was via Proton.

He also refused to reveal the amount of investment put into the project, passing the ball instead to the private parties to reveal the figure.

The companies involved in this initiative include Proton, Air Asia and Naza Motors.

Proton Holdings Bhd chairperson Mohd Nadzmi Mohd Salleh said the project was still at an early stage and as such was unable to reveal the total investment involved and the shareholding structures.