

PM wants Malaysia to continue hosting F1 race

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SEPANG: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi wants the Sepang International Circuit (SIC) to continue organising the Formula One race beyond 2010.

SIC chairman Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir said the prime minister met FI supremo Bernie Ecclestone on Saturday and the latter said there was no problem with Malaysia hosting the F1 race.

Yesterday's race was the ninth edition of the Malaysian Grand Prix.

Mokhzani said the prime minister had expressed his support for Malaysia to continue hosting the event.

Ecclestone had told Abdullah that the race would continue here.

Malaysia's contract to organise the F1 race ends in 2010.

Mokhzani said SIC hoped that the contract could be extended for

another three to five years.

"So far, discussions on this (contract) have been positive. We will have to study the draft of the agreement first and look for return investment."

He added that the agreement would be submitted to the government.

Mokhzani also said Abdullah was happy with the huge turnout at the race.

"This is the first time the grand stand is full to the brim. Looks like

this is the best turnout so far."

The grand stand can accommodate 47,000 spectators. Mokhzani said 115,000 people turned up for yesterday's race, 35,000 on Saturday and 4,000 on Friday.

The prime minister gave away the winner's trophy to Fernando Alonso of the McLaren Mercedes-Benz team.

Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Nur Zaharah were also present.