

Both sides to gain if Singapore gets F1, too

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SEPANG: Formula One's Bernie Ecclestone is open to having races in both Malaysia and Singapore "as it could only be positive for the region".

He told the *New Straits Times* that the looming possibility of a Singapore Grand Prix would generate greater interest in the motorsport for both countries and others in Southeast Asia.

"I can only see a positive impact for Malaysia. (Should the Singapore GP come about) the races will be at different ends of the racing calendar.

"The Malaysian GP would probably remain (at the beginning of the season), while the Singapore race will probably be at the end."

Ecclestone said the race in Singapore, which was being proposed to run at night, would see Malaysians going to Singapore to watch the race, just as Singaporeans come to the Sepang International Circuit every year.

"It will be a street race and at night, so it will be colourful and interesting. I see a lot of people from Malaysia going down there and vice versa."

Asked if racing fans would give the Malaysian GP a miss and in-

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Bernie Ecclestone
Formula One Management president

stead attend the Singapore race, Ecclestone said he did not think so.

He said the Singapore race would give world exposure to both countries.

"Think back a few years ago, before Malaysia had a grand prix. Many people never thought of coming here before Malaysia had F1 races.

"So the races give more exposure and open people's eyes to the country. With the Singapore race, there will be even more interest in the region," he said.

Asked if Malaysia would contin-

ue to host F1 races beyond 2010 when the contract with F1 ends, Ecclestone said there was no reason not to.

"We have a contract which we could've cancelled if we wanted because of the tobacco legislation (in Malaysia). That contract is quite clear that in the event we could not run the tobacco brands on the cars, we could cancel it.

"But we have not done it up till now," he said.

Meanwhile, Michael Roche, who heads the feasibility study team for the proposed Singapore GP, said the bid for an F1 race in

the island republic was still a "work in progress".

"We don't have the luxury of space in an island city state. That is always the big challenge — trying to make it feasible.

"They've improved a lot of the road systems. A lot of land has been reclaimed, giving us the luxury of being able to create a pit area.

"But nothing has been confirmed yet. The reason we're hesitating is that it's such a massive jigsaw puzzle. Each time we think we've overcome an obstacle, we lift up the stone and there are other issues and obstacles," he said before he and his colleague Colin Syn met Ecclestone.

Roche agreed with Ecclestone that the two races would bring greater exposure and economic gains to the region.

However, he believed that having the Malaysian and Singaporean GPs back-to-back would make more sense as spectators from all over the world could spend two weekends travelling across the region.

On fears that the Singapore race would pose a threat to the Malaysian GP, Roche said: "It's not our intention to come to any country to take a race away. We've worked with Ecclestone for a long time to bring this about."