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Dr M: M'sia benefited much from F1

SEPANG: Time has flashed by and the man behind the Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix seems almost amazed that the race is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

"Time has passed by very quickly and I never thought it would be 10 years so soon," said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad after visiting the Sepang F1 Circuit medical centre yesterday.

"But we have done very well and I think Malaysia has benefited much from F1 in terms of tourism."

Dr Mahathir, the former prime minister, was key to bringing the Formula One race to Malaysian soil.

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It started in 1996 when he met F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone at the Portuguese Grand Prix in Estoril and convinced him to bring the race to Malaysia.

The first Malaysian GP was held in 1999. Dr Mahathir arrived at the circuit at 12.45pm and visited the medical centre, which is also the first medical service in the Formula One calendar to be accredited with the ISO9001:2000.

He was accompanied by his son Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir, who is also Sepang International Circuit chairman, and chief medical officer Brig-Jen Datuk Dr Mohd Zin Bidin.