

**Dr M Patron Of BMW Malaysian Open Women's Tennis  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 21 (Bernama) -- The organiser of the BMW Malaysian Open 2012 today announced the appointment of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the patron of the tournament.

The third edition of the BMW Malaysian Open, a Women's Tennis Association (WTA) tournament, will be held from Feb 27 to March 4 at the Bukit Kiara Equestrian and Country Resort.

The competition will feature an impressive line-up of stars, among them seven-time Grand Slam winner Venus Williams.

"We are delighted to have been able to make this announcement as Tun Dr Mahathir is certainly the country's master brand-builder as he is long credited with spearheading the phenomenal growth of Malaysia's economy.

"We believe that this augurs well for the BMW Malaysian Open as we've set out to augment the Malaysian sports and tourism industry," said BMW Malaysia managing director Geoffrey Briscoe in a statement here today.

Briscoe said the former prime minister strongly advocated bringing international sporting events here and envisioned Malaysia as a premium tourist destination with focus on popular destinations such as Langkawi.

Meanwhile, Lawn Tennis Association of Malaysia (LTAM) president Tan Sri Abdul Razak Latiff said: "This tournament has really established itself in its first two years and this in turn has aided the development of tennis in Malaysia and moves us towards being a key sports tourism destination in the world.

"I am really excited to have Tun Dr Mahathir as patron of this tournament as his involvement will add an important element to the tournament and reinforce our efforts to bring more local and international attention to tennis here in Malaysia."

Besides Williams, the BMW Malaysian Open 2012 will also feature current world number nine Marion Bartoli of France and China's rising star Peng Shuai, all of whom will be competing for a total prize purse of USD220,000 (about RM690,172).

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