

**Red Bull air race a missed opportunity to promote Malaysia, says Dr M
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Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today ticked off Putrajaya and corporations for not sponsoring the recently held Red Bull Air Race, which was held in Malaysia.

In his latest blog posting, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was firmly established in the international arena today because past administrations had the initiative to promote the country.

The Red Bull Air Race, established in 2003 and created by Red Bull, is an international series of air races in which competitors have to navigate a challenging obstacle course in the fastest time.

Pilots fly individually against the clock and have to complete tight turns through a slalom course consisting of pylons, known as "Air Gates".

The air race organisers cancelled all events scheduled for 2011, 2012 and 2013 worldwide, but the series resumed in 2014. The three year hiatus was taken by Red Bull for safety improvements and reorganisation.

Malaysia hosted the Red Bull Air Race World Championship Putrajaya 2014 for the first time ever this year on May 17 and 18.

Dr Mahathir, Malaysia's longest serving premier of 22 years, said a lot of effort had been put into promoting Malaysia as a tourist destination, to the extent that 24 million tourists now visit the country.

"Malaysia has changed a lot from an agricultural country to an industrial nation. Today, most foreigners have heard of Malaysia and know where it is," he wrote in

the blog posting.

"When Putrajaya spent RM280 million to construct the Sepang Formula 1 race track, there were a lot of criticisms from various quarters."

"But Malaysia has more than recouped the cost of constructing the race track, as millions have flocked to the country to watch the annual Malaysian F1 Grand Prix."

Therefore, Dr Mahathir said, he did not understand why Putrajaya had not helped out the organisers of Red Bull Air Race which was held in Malaysia's administrative capital.

"This race is similar to Formula One, it is held all over the world and watched by millions of people."

"The majority of those who watch this race are locals, but there are many loyal fans that also travel to watch the race," Dr Mahathir wrote.

"The advertising value of this race is very high while the cost of organising it is low," he added. "Instead of merely contributing a small sum, Putrajaya should help out the organisers more financially, and so should the big corporations."

Dr Mahathir said the Formula One races were a good example with more than 100,000 crammed into the race track over the three days of the event.

"This includes almost 30,000 foreigners who specifically travel to Malaysia to catch the race," Dr Mahathir said.

"More importantly, the race is broadcast live by more than 300 television networks worldwide to more than 300 million viewers."

"These viewers not only watch the race but also see many aspects of Malaysia's developments and facilities."

He pointed out that advertising on Japanese television networks was a costly affair, with a three minute clip costing RM1 million.

"But during the Formula One race, Malaysia gets two hours of television coverage daily for three days without paying a single cent."

"If we do the mathematics on the advertising value which Malaysia gets for three days on more than 300 television stations worldwide, it is much more than RM280 million."

That does not include the amount of money which the 30,000 tourists have spent in Malaysia during their stay here to catch the race for the past 15 years, Dr Mahathir added. – August 27, 2014.

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