

**Government To Continue Supporting Formula 1 Due To Economic Impact - Najib  
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SEPANG, March 26 (Bernama) -- The government has decided to continue its support to host the Malaysian Formula 1 Grand Prix due to its economic impact to the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

He said taking into consideration the economic impact the prestigious event brought to Malaysia, including the many spin-off industries and businesses that have emerged to support Formula 1, "the government acknowledges its importance and relevance, and has decided to continue supporting it."

Formula 1 is considered the nation's biggest and most prestigious annual sporting spectacle as the race attracts racing enthusiasts from all corners of the world, he said in his message in the Formula 1 Petronas Malaysia Grand Prix official programme book.

He said the Malaysian Grand Prix which was incepted in 1999 and marking its 17th edition, has steadily developed in stature and prominence, and has created a tremendous amount of positive exposure for Malaysia.

"Over 500 million viewers from over 180 countries follow the proceedings on TV, and many more keep track through the print and social media platform," he said adding that for the past 16 consecutive years, thousands of fans have descended on the Sepang International Circuit to enjoy the grand prix.

Touching on the upcoming race, Najib welcomed reigning World Champion Lewis Hamilton and his Petronas-backed Mercedes team who are "back home" for the first time since sensationally winning both titles on offer last year.

"On behalf of the government of Malaysia, I congratulate the Mercedes AMG Petronas F1 team, and Lewis Hamilton for an outstanding 2014 season and we look forward to their continued success this season," he said.

For the record, Hamilton fought off teammate Nico Rosberg to give Mercedes a dominant victory in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne, two weeks ago.

Najib also expressed his appreciation to the Tourism and Culture Ministry, Youth and Sports Ministry and all the government agencies involved in the event.

"I also want to thank the management and team of the Sepang International Circuit (SIC), for their untiring efforts in ensuring that all necessary preparations and requirements to host the race are fulfilled.

"To the hundreds of race officials, race marshals, volunteers and other personnel involved, thank you for your assistance to ensure another safe and successful 2015 Formula 1

Petronas Malaysia Grand Prix," he said.

Najib also wished all the drivers and teams the very best for a safe and successful weekend of racing.

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