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Dr M confident over Security Council seat

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed confidence that Malaysia would clinch a seat on the 15-member United Nations' Security Council for the 1999-2001 term.

"We see a lot of support for this. We probably will get a seat," he told reporters after attending MCA's Chinese New Year celebrations in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Asked why Malaysia is seeking a seat on the Security Council again, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would like to participate in any situation where the country could express its opinions.

"In a situation where we can voice our opinions freely, we would like to participate," he added.

Should Malaysia be appointed as a non-permanent member of the powerful Security Council, it would be the country's third successful bid.

Malaysia was first elected in 1965 for a split two-year term alongside with then Czechoslovakia, before serving a full two-year term in 1989-1990.

On Tuesday, visiting Colombian Foreign Minister Dr Maria Emma Meija Velez had conveyed to her Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Colombia's support for Malaysia's bid for a seat on the Security Council.

To a question on chairmanship for the Non-Aligned Movement, Dr Mahathir said although Colombia has also invited Malaysia to bid for this chair, Malaysia has yet to make a decision on it.

Furthermore, he said, the next country in line for the chairmanship is South America and then only Malaysia. At present, the NAM chairmanship is held by Colombia.

"If we go by turns, after Colombia is South Africa. Then only will it be our turn. There is still a long way to go."

Dr Mahathir also expressed disappointment over the attitude of road users, particularly motorcyclists, who drove recklessly.

"I am saddened by this. Even when I am driving, I can see these suicidal motorcyclists. They are really in search of trouble.

"There is nothing wrong with the roads. There is nothing wrong with the vehicles. It is their fault. We have reminded them and yet they continue testing their fate," he added.

He said accidents do happen, but in the case of some motorbike riders, they are looking for trouble.

"If we drive our respective cars carefully, we can go fast but not too fast. However, in the case of some motorcyclists, whenever they see cars, they want to show off. That's how they become victims," he added.

Since "Ops Statik" was launched to ensure road safety during the double celebrations, a total of 118 people was reported to have died in 4,965 road accidents.

Figures up to yesterday revealed 58 per cent of the victims were motorcyclists and their pillion riders.

Statistics also show the number of deaths and the rate of accidents during the seven days of operations have increased compared with last year when 103 deaths were reported in 4,200 accidents within the same period.

Dr Mahathir advised those travelling to and from their hometowns for the double celebrations to be careful behind the wheels.

Meanwhile, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said that

although various measures had been taken to reduce the rate of accidents during festivities, there were still some road users who were reckless.

"Let's not turn a joyful occasion into a sad one. If we wish to return to our hometowns to be with our loved ones, let's ensure we are alive," the MCA president added.

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