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Shahrir: My comeback makes me feel like a new candidate

JOHOR BARU, Fri. - Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad had good reason to celebrate today.

After 14 years on the sidelines, he is back on the main stage, contesting the Johor Baru parliamentary constituency he represented from 1978 to 1990.

And if speculation is to be believed, he is prime candidate for a federal position. He served as a minister in the Mahathir administration.

One of the country's most outspoken politicians, he played it cool today. "It is no big deal. The only difference is that I feel like a new candidate," said the maverick politician, who last contested in the 1986 general election. Two years later, he contested and won the Johor Baru seat as an independent.

He returned to the ruling party, did not hold any major position but never refrained from saying what was on his mind, even when it ruffled feathers.

The 55-year-old promised not to hold his tongue even if elected.

Shahrir has been an elected member of the Umno supreme council since 1990.

Asked how he felt about making a comeback, he said there was no major change in role because the Johor Baru Umno division was all about the "the politics of service".

"All the time, our emphasis in Johor Baru has been on more action to serve the people. The only extra thing now is that I have a new avenue to bring up the people's problems in Parliament," he said.

Shahrir said his BN teammates in the Johor Baru parliamentary constituency - the MCA's Freddy Long (Stulang) and Ali Mohamed of Umno (Tanjung Puteri) - were established grassroots leaders.

He deflected questions on the possibility of him receiving a Cabinet post after the polls, saying: "Position is not as essential as it sounds in politics. You need not be an MP or minister to serve. That has never been my motivation."