

**Najib may not win two-thirds majority: Dr M
Malaysiakini.com
November 18, 2010**

The ruling BN coalition may not be able to regain its much-coveted two-thirds parliamentary majority but it may be able to wrest back one or two states, said former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Mahathir told Bloomberg in a Nov 16 interview that BN "may not get the two-thirds majority which would enable them to rule the country with a strong majority" in the next general elections, which must be called by 2013,

However, he said that the ruling coalition "might be able to recover maybe one or two" of the five states which are currently under opposition's control.

While he did not mention the states which are to fall into BN's hands, it is likely that Mahathir was referring to his home state of Kedah, which was lost to PAS for the first time in 2008.

Another state which BN has set its eyes on is Selangor, the country's premier state.

Mahathir must be buoyed by the BN victory in two recent by-elections - the Galas state seat and Batu Sapi parliamentary seat - as well as the crisis confronting Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

"At the moment his (Anwar's) party is in a shambles," said Mahathir.

Anwar, who is Mahathir's former protege, is facing possible revolt within his PKR following the likely resignation of former law minister Zaid Ibrahim.

Zaid's plan to quit comes as a serious setback for the PKR, plagued by infighting.

The founder of Malaysia's largest law firm before entering politics, Zaid was seen as a leading light in the opposition and touted as a possible successor to Anwar if the ongoing sodomy trial sidelines him from politics.

Najib a 'vast improvement' over Pak Lah

Mahathir has described Najib as a "vast improvement" over his predecessor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Abdullah was handpicked by Mahathir to succeed him when he retired in October 2003. However, Mahathir called for Abdullah to quit following the setbacks in the 2008 general election.

Speculation is rife that Najib would call a snap election next year on the back of a recovering economy and the recent by-election triumphs.

"There's a certain feel-good factor spreading in his camp," Ooi, a senior fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, told Bloomberg.

"The premier may take the risk and call for general elections before the opposition catches

its breath.”

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/148519>