

Anwar to have role in polls 'one way or another', says Dr M
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 12 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will still play a role in the next general election, but expressed confidence Barisan Nasional (BN) would still form the government.

The former prime minister, who sacked his then deputy Anwar in 1998, said the ruling coalition was in a good position to win the next polls, adding that the only question was the size of its majority.

"One way or another, he will play a role," he said when asked if Anwar's ongoing second sodomy trial would be a factor in the general election.

He said that in the 1999 general election following Anwar's sodomy conviction, BN lost about 300,000 Malay votes, resulting in "Umno losing a lot of seats."

"In 1999, he was very strong because he was in jail and he had his black eye and said that I conspired to get rid of him," he told reporters in Putrajaya today.

Anwar's sacking led to mass street protests in what became known as the Reformasi movement.

The 1999 election saw BN's dominance of Parliament shrink from 162 to 147 of the 192 seats available.

But the ruling coalition recovered in 2004, winning over 90 per cent of the 219 seats on hand.

Anwar was released soon after the 2004 polls and led an opposition pact to win 82 federal seats and five state governments in Election 2008, denying BN its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament.

This resulted in Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi resigning as PM midterm, with Datuk Seri Najib Razak replacing him at the helm.

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