

**Risk analyst: Bersatu won't threaten Umno in next GE**  
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The newly set-up Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) will not pose an immediate threat to either Umno or BN in the next general election, an international analyst group says.

BMI Research, a subsidiary of Fitch Group, said the new Umno splinter party will struggle to differentiate itself in the "crowded" and "fragmented" opposition.

"These existing challenges thus suggest that Bersatu currently does not pose a threat to either Umno or BN in the 2018 election, as the party has yet to reach an understanding with the other political parties," BMI said in a political risk analysis published yesterday.

It added that the party lacked grassroots support, despite the popularity of its chairperson Dr Mahathir Mohamad and its president Muhyiddin Yassin.

"Furthermore, Bersatu only appears to have two main power bases, in Pagoh and Kedah, with these power bases largely deriving from the personal popularities of both Mahathir and Muhyiddin in their traditional strongholds."

Bersatu was formed by Umno rebels such as Mahathir and Muhyiddin, to oppose Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and BN in the next general election.

They plan to work with the opposition in an effort to ensure straight fights against BN.

However, Bloomberg recently quoted two unnamed Umno division chiefs saying that the 14th general election could be held as early as March next year.

This lack of time could hamper the opposition, as Bersatu has yet to initiate seat negotiations with PKR and PAS.

But BMI Research believes the opposition has a chance if they can unite behind a single leader.

"Mahathir's personal popularity among many voters - particularly among the older generation - could see Umno supporters vote for Bersatu instead, if the party is able to increase awareness of its name, especially in the rural areas.

"Furthermore, the continued popularity of DAP among urban Chinese will likely see the party retain their existing seats, enabling the opposition to consolidate the gains they made in the previous election," BMI Research said in its analysis.

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