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Najib unassailable in his position, says The Economist

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PETALING JAYA: Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is politically unassailable in his position as Prime Minister despite the attacks against him, influential publication *The Economist* reported.

The London-based weekly news-magazine in its latest issue said that despite an open letter by former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad calling "for the umpteenth time" for Najib's resignation, the biggest risk he would face at the coming Umno general assembly was the "trivial embarrassment of a spot of booing and heckling".

The article in the publication's "Banyan" column said it was unlike-

ly that Najib was facing any serious legal threat over allegations regarding the issue of the RM2.6bil donation.

"Politically he (Najib) is unassailable. Najib has denied any wrongdoing in receiving the money, in 2013, or making any personal gain.

"Malaysia's anti-corruption commission confirmed that the money had come from donors and was not, as had been alleged, siphoned off from a troubled state investment fund 1MDB, whose advisory board Najib chairs. So the prime minister does not face any serious legal threat," it reported.

The article said Najib's strong

position was partly due to his "skill at playing politics the Malaysian way".

"And no obvious rival has emerged within Umno. Of those conceivably in the frame, none seems likely to fare any better at the polls than Najib. As for the opposition, it is in disarray."

The article said that Dr Mahathir's dire warnings about Umno losing power at the next general election, "sound increasingly like the impotent rants of a cranky has-been".

The article said that apart from a few "malcontents" most notably Dr Mahathir, Umno seems to be behind the Prime Minister.

Journalist Jahabar Sadiq from the *Malaysian Insider* online news portal was quoted as saying that Najib had "bested" Dr Mahathir and was "sailing on, as grandly as a gondola".

The article noted that United States President Barack Obama and Najib got along.

"Mr Najib is urbane, charming and plays up Malaysia's strengths. It is a bastion of moderate Islam, an important ally against Islamist extremism."

The article credited Najib for the country's inclusion in the Trans-Pacific Partnership and its good ties with China.

It noted that Malaysia has also had a successful year as the 2015 Asean chair.

"So at home and abroad, many have reason to cheer Najib's ability to roll with the punches.

"And with the economy growing at about 5% a year, he can probably also survive a weakening currency and grumbles about rising prices."

The article said Najib is adept at balancing acts, presenting himself as the defender of Malaysia's Muslim-Malay majority, "and the best protection the Chinese and Indian minorities have against resentful and assertive Malay political dominance."