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# 'Difficult for PPBM to dislodge Umno'

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**LONGTIME FOES:**  
PPBM must work with opposition to stand a chance, says 'The Economist'

**ADRIAN LAI**  
KUALA LUMPUR  
adrianlai@nst.com.my

**T**UN Dr Mahathir Mohamad has no choice but to strike an alliance with his former enemies in the opposition if his new party is to stand a chance in the next general election, said weekly news magazine *The Economist*.

In an article titled "Can a leopard change its spots?", *The Economist* said Dr Mahathir's Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) would find it difficult to dislodge Barisan Nasional from power on its own.

It said Dr Mahathir was now willing to work with longtime nemesis Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim after failing to unseat Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

"To stand any chance, Bersatu (PPBM) will need to cosy up to Malaysia's other opposition parties, which nearly toppled the government in 2013, but are now squabbling.

"That explains the courting of Mr Anwar, who was arrested shortly after Dr Mahathir sacked him, beaten by the chief of police and jailed for corruption and sodomy after a farcical trial, as Dr Mahathir stood by," said the article published on Sunday.

The article was referring to jailed opposition leader Anwar, who had served as deputy prime minister before being sacked by Dr Mahathir over the former's first sodomy case in 1998.

PKR, of which Anwar is de facto leader, is part of the Pakatan Harapan opposition pact with DAP and Parti Amanah Negara.

"Since last year, Mr Anwar has been back in prison, convicted in a new sodomy case

which looks just as suspect as the last. Dr Mahathir says he has 'no problem with him now'," the article said.

Dr Mahathir made heads turn on Sept 5 when he arrived at the High Court here to "show support" for Anwar's suit to strike down the National Security Council (NSC) Act 2015.

The longtime political foes, hav-

ing met for the first time in 18 years, proceeded to shake hands and spoke privately for half an hour.

The article suggested that a pact between Dr Mahathir and Anwar seemed likely, and was essential if the opposition wanted to avoid multi-cornered fights against BN in the next general election.

"But Malaysia's liberals would feel much happier if Dr Mahathir were

more contrite about his part in the country's present predicament.

"He is probably right to insist that, on his watch, corruption was more limited than the lurid misdeeds of which the present leadership stands accused. But it was under his tenure that Umno's leaders became so hard to dislodge, and

Malaysia's courts so cowed."

The article went on to say that the opposition was worried about Dr Mahathir's true intentions and whether the veteran politician and his party could oust Umno.

"Previous splinters from Umno have eventually reattached themselves to the party. The government claims Dr Mahathir's real goal is to install his son as prime minister."

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*The Economist*