

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	23 JULY 2017

MOTIVATED BY SELF-INTEREST

DR M'S ACT OF DESPERATION?

NST-23/7/2017 pg. 20.

He is courting his former nemesis, the British press, in a bid to oust the Barisan Nasional government

MALAYSIANS know by now Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's strong and controversial views on Britain and the British press. He was not very well disposed towards both of them.

He had not studied there (unlike the three prime ministers before him) and he considered the UK little more than a decrepit colonial power.

During his 22-year rule as premier, his displeasure towards Britain even extended to the Commonwealth.

In a speech during British prime minister Margaret Thatcher's visit to Kuala Lumpur, Dr Mahathir told her that the Commonwealth was "a creature of the past".

But in the prelude to his "British Buy Last II" policy, Dr Mahathir picked an open fight with the British press, whom he considered to be patronising and malicious.

"We are angry at the British press and we have no way of taking action against the British press," he once said.

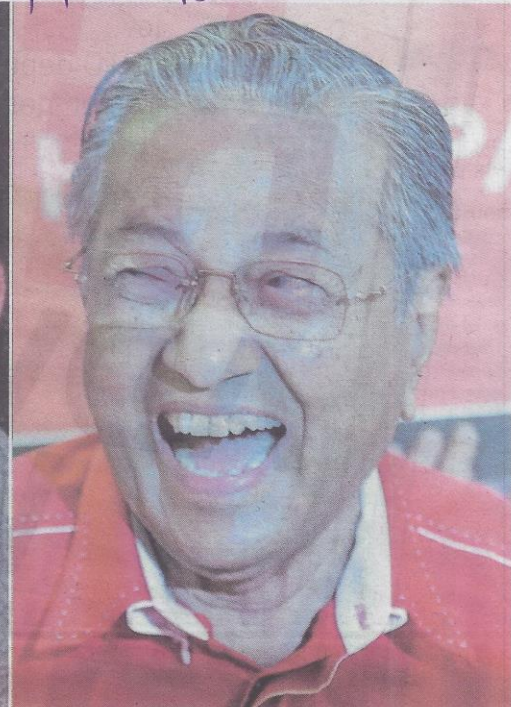
Dr Mahathir has now turned to the British and foreign media to help in his desperate campaign to oust the current government in the next general election.

And he still knows how to make headlines wherever he goes.

On a Hari Raya holiday in London with his family recently, he gave an interview to *The Guardian* and declared that he is backing his once bitter foe Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim — the man he once sacked and imprisoned — as the next prime minister.

"In which case he would be able to participate in politics and become PM. I can have no objection to that," Dr Mahathir told *The Guardian*.

His "remarkable political U-turn" (even this term is too soft) as *The Guardian* described it, of



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak says it is ironic that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad now needs Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the man he sacked and jailed.

course made international headlines and elicited a strong rejoinder at home from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and a string of BN leaders.

But what he didn't tell *The Guardian* was that he had earlier met Anwar's daughter in London during the trip.

Nurul Izzah was apparently sent there as the emissary of Lim Kit Siang to offer the post of interim PM on condition that Dr Mahathir, who is chairman of Pakatan Harapan, agrees that as interim PM he would apply for a royal pardon for Anwar.

Kit Siang knows very well that his DAP party and PKR alone would not be able to topple BN: He needs to join forces with Dr Mahathir and his PPBM, which now holds just one seat.

Under Kit Siang's grand plan, Anwar will be the permanent PM provided he is released from prison and receives a royal pardon.

That will only be possible if PH, under the helm of Kit Siang, is in power.

Dr Mahathir alluded to this in his interview with *The Guardian*.

"In the case of Anwar we can make a case that he was unfairly treated. The decision of the court was obviously influenced by the government and I think the incoming government would be able to persuade the king to give a full pardon for Anwar."

But what is the real motivation behind Dr Mahathir's open backing for Anwar?

Dr Mahathir resorted to that to escape criminal prosecution, Najib said.

According to him, Dr Mahathir's support for Anwar is driven by his "deep concern" about the government's decision to form a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) to investigate a multi-billion-dollar foreign exchange scandal when Dr Mahathir was premier.

"As Mahathir knows well, Anwar cannot legally contest, so this U-turn is not about the coming general election... Mahathir knows that the RCI findings could lead to criminal prosecution, so he cannot afford to have individuals highly relevant to the case such as Anwar testifying against him," said Najib.

Najib said that it was "ironic that Mahathir now needs Anwar, the man he sacked and jailed".

Dr Mahathir's "crusade" is also motivated by "selfish personal interest" and he is "obsessed" about making his son Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir prime minister.

"Mahathir demanded Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi resign as prime minister, now demands my resignation, and will demand my successor resign until his son becomes prime minister — whatever the cost to Malaysia," said Najib.

The Guardian article also said Dr Mahathir had regretted not allowing Anwar to succeed him, but the former premier later denied saying this.

"No, I didn't say anything about that. What is past is past. If you talk about the past, then we will have a lot of problems," he said.

Well, Dr M. Your past will continue to haunt you.

jail@nst.com.my

A veteran newsman, the writer believes that a good journalist should be curious and sceptical at the same time