

Unseating Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak. Mahathir's New Political Party

Thousands apply to be part of new Malaysian opposition party

By [Melissa Goh](#)

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Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia) has received thousands of membership applications, although formal registration is still pending approval by the Registrar of Societies (ROS), said former Malaysian Prime Minister and party chairman Mahathir Mohamad on Sunday (Aug 21).

The 91-year-old statesman was out and about again after recovering from a bad bout of cough.

The application to register Bersatu with the ROS was submitted on Aug 9 by former Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.



Dr Mahathir Mohamad (centre) speaking about new political party Bersatu, which he chairs. (Photo: Melissa Goh)

Bersatu membership will be open to ethnic Malays and the indigenous people of Malaysia, also known as Bumiputra or sons of the soil. Non-Bumiputra citizens can apply to be associate members, who will have no voting rights but can be appointed to the party's top leadership.

At the press conference, pro-tem president Muhyiddin was already talking about seat allocations in the coming polls for the General Election (GE), even though it is not due until 2018.

Mr Muhyiddin said Bersatu will work with all opposition parties in order to unseat Prime Minister Najib Razak's Barisan National (BN) ruling coalition in the next GE.

"We are working towards finding common ground, a winning formula that will defeat BN in the coming election," said Mr Muhyiddin, who was sacked from Mr Najib's cabinet in August 2015.

Many Bersatu leaders, including student activist Syed Saddiq and Dr Mahathir, have hinted their intention to take part in an anti-establishment rally called #TangkapMO1 (Arrest 'Malaysian Official 1', the person referenced in a US lawsuit seizing the assets of troubled state fund 1MDB). The rally is organised by a coalition of student unions and will take place in Kuala Lumpur on Aug 27.

"I will see, but I will be around in KL and not going anywhere," said Dr Mahathir.

The police have reminded organisers about serving a 10-day notice under the laws governing public assemblies. Dataran Merdeka, the iconic independence square, has been declared off limits.

Meanwhile, "red shirt" protesters, led by pro-Malay rights activist Jamal Yunos, have warned of a counter-rally if the #TangkapMO1 rally goes ahead.

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