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Dr M forming new party

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Former PM moves to shore up Opposition in next general election

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PUTRAJAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad will form a new political party which will join forces with the Opposition in a bid to oust Barisan Nasional in the next general election.

The party will be part of a greater coalition comprising PKR, DAP and Amanah, as well NGOs and individuals.

The former prime minister said this was agreed upon during a meeting between him and representatives of the three Opposition parties and NGOs held at the Perdana Leadership Foundation.

"We have agreed to set aside our differences and work as a coalition.

"We will also set aside our respective political struggles and concentrate on winning the next general election.

"We know that this must be done if we want to fight Barisan and win," he told a packed press conference after a three-hour meeting attended by former Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal, DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang, Amanah deputy president Salahuddin Ayub, PKR vice-president Shamsul Iskandar Md Akin and PAS Pokok Sena MP Datuk Mahfuz Omar.

On the new political party, Dr Mahathir said efforts were underway to launch it soon, adding that he was mulling the idea of having a Malay-based party but had to consider the realities of the country.

He said the new party, which

three other former Umno members – Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Shafie and his son Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir – had agreed to join, was another vessel for those who found other Opposition parties "not so attractive".

Asked if he would be leading the party, the former prime minister said he would lead in its setting up.

"I will be the founding member but this doesn't mean I will be president or PM," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there was no need for him to contest in the general election but he would play the role of a leader in the party as well as in the coalition.

He said the meeting also agreed that parties will only field one candidate among them and all the rest would throw their support, point-

ing out that everyone realised the importance of co-operation in order to win against Barisan.

"The aim is simple, we want to change the government," he said.

At the press conference, Dr Mahathir repeatedly accused Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak of "causing damage" to the country and called for the release of the Auditor-General's Report on 1Malaysia Development Berhad.

On the status of Pakatan Harapan after the setting up of the new coalition, he said it would be up to PKR, DAP and Amanah to determine whether to continue with that pact.

He said it did not matter if the Opposition pact has more component members, pointing out that Barisan has 14 members including parties in Sabah and Sarawak.