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Former prime minister **Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad** (fourth from left) raising hands with his political foes, opposition leaders and civil society activists after signing the 'Citizens' Declaration' in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Among those with him in the 'alliance of personal and political convenience' are (from left) DAP adviser Lim Kit Slang, former MCA president Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik, former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, PKR deputy president Datuk Seri Azmin Ali and former Kedah menteri besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir (right). Pic by Asyraf Hamzah

## Dr Mahathir leads 'unusual pact'

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**MEMORANDUM:** He gets more than 50 unlikely allies to sign declaration

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A "VERY unusual" alliance was formed yesterday after former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad joined forces with longtime political enemies, opposition leaders and civil society groups in a cross-party push to oust Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Dr Mahathir's anti-Najib campaign kicked up a notch after he led more than 50 high-profile politicians, mostly from the opposition and anti-government activists, in signing the "Citizens' Declaration".

The Dr Mahathir-inspired declaration, aimed at removing Najib from power, drew support from the unlikely of allies and rallied his harshest critics to his cause.

They included DAP adviser Lim Kit Slang, who was detained under the Internal Security Act during Dr Mahathir's tenure as prime minister, PKR deputy president Datuk Seri Azmin Ali and Amanah president Mohamad Sabu.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who was sacked as deputy prime minister and jailed during Dr Mahathir's administration, had on Thursday offered support in efforts to remove Najib. He is in jail again after being convicted for sodomy.

"As you can see, this is a very unusual group of people. There is only one thing common for us; we are all citizens of this country," Dr

Mahathir said during the signing event here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir's former political rival Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, former Kedah menteri besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir, former Terengganu menteri besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Said and former MCA president Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik attended the event. National Human Rights Society (Hakam) president Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan and Bersih chairman Maria Chin Abdullah were among the social activists who signed the declaration.

"It is not about joining the opposition or any group. It's about citizens joining together to show support," said Dr Mahathir, reading from a memorandum agreed by the 58 signatories.

Among others, the declaration called for the removal of Najib as prime minister through non-violent and legally permissible means, and the removal of all those who had acted in concert with Najib.

It also called for the repealing of all laws and agreements that "violated" the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Federal Constitution, and the restoration of integrity in institutions that had been "undermined", such as the police, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, Bank Negara Malaysia and the Public Accounts Committee.

Dr Mahathir, however, admitted that the group had yet to formulate a plan to remove Najib. It is learnt that the declaration would be published online for Malaysians to sign.

Four signatories did not attend the signing event. They were Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal, former finance minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, DAP national publicity chief Tony Pua and lawyer activist Matthias Chang.

Later, Dr Mahathir made it clear that he would not be joining Pakatan Harapan despite his decision to band together with the opposition leaders to oust Najib.

Responding to a question from the media, he said: "We seem to be thinking along political party lines."

"There is a difference between the people's agenda and party's. The media has to understand this."

When asked whether he could trust the opposition, Dr Mahathir said: "The question of (trusting) the opposition doesn't arise here. We are here as Malaysians."

Kit Slang, similarly, avoided answering whether he could trust Dr Mahathir.

"The country is at an historic juncture. What we see today is not a realignment of political forces, but a national alignment of Malaysian forces for national interest."

Muhyiddin later said that a secretariat, to be chaired by Mukhriz, would be formed to discuss plans to seek the removal of Najib.

When asked whether he expected to be sacked from Umno for joining the movement, Muhyiddin said: "I may be an Umno member, but I am a Malaysian citizen and I have the right to air my views."

On the glaring absence of PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, party vice-president Rafizi Ramli told reporters that she did not sign the declaration as a "safety precaution".

"If at any point we feel that things go out of hand, or things stray from our reform agenda, (opposition leader) Dr Wan Azizah will have the final say," he said, adding that Pakatan Harapan leaders who signed the declaration were still bound by any decisions made by the pact's presidential council.

Dr Wan Azizah, who is opposition leader, helms the council.