

Mahathir to form new party

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PETALING JAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the formation of a new Malay-based party shortly after the High Court struck out a suit by five others and him over the nullification of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia membership.

The former prime minister said the yet-to-be registered party would neither be part of Pakatan Harapan or Perikatan Nasional.

"This Malay-based party will be an independent party and will uphold the initial struggle of fighting against corruption which Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia had hijacked.

"We do not have a name for it yet. For now, we will call it Parti Bebas (Independent Party). The temporary president is Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir. Yes, I think I am the chairman for now," he said during

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the press conference at Yayasan Al-Bukhary here yesterday.

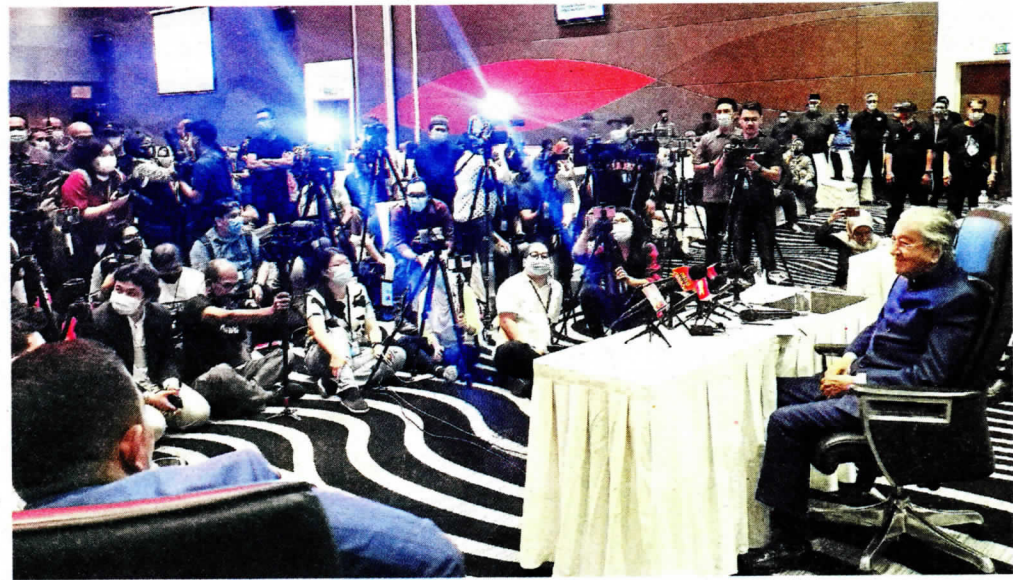
Stating that he did not want to further divide the Malays, he said he was left with no choice as Bersatu had been "hijacked".

"There were factions in Bersatu which disagreed with this hijacking. Six of the 12 Bersatu founders are a separate faction but the president refuses to acknowledge us as part of the party and removed us.

"So, we are forming a new party. This party will uphold the initial values of Bersatu when it was formed. We will fight corruption," said Dr Mahathir.

The party intends to contest in the upcoming Slim by-election by nominating an independent candidate.

Also at the press conference were Mukhriz, who is Jerlun MP, Sri Gading MP Datuk Dr Shahrudin Md Salleh, Simpang Renggam MP Dr Maszlee Malik and former



New path:
Dr Mahathir facing the media to announce a new party.

Bersatu secretary-general Datuk Marzuki Yahya.

Dr Mahathir denied he was breaking away from Pakatan chief Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim with the formation of his new party.

"We are not breaking away from anyone. We are freeing ourselves from everyone. We wanted to work with Pakatan but we have some problems with the biggest party in

Pakatan," said Dr Mahathir.

After the press conference, Dr Mahathir left to meet about 300 supporters at a nearby hotel.

Meanwhile, Barisan Nasional secretary-general Tan Sri Annuar Musa said the right of anyone to form political parties must be respected.

Bersatu deputy president Datuk Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu said he

was saddened by the announcement of the new party.

"Since Bersatu is a party that still carries the values Dr Mahathir championed, there should be no need to form a new party.

"However, if Dr Mahathir thinks this will strengthen the struggle of the Malays, I wish him all the best," said Ahmad Faizal, who is Perak Menteri Besar.