

## **Batu Puteh task force cites Dr M's possible 'negligence'**

**Malaysiakini**

**14 October 2022**

UPDATED 6.04PM | Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has come under the crosshairs of the Special Task Force to review laws relating to sovereignty over Batu Puteh.

In its report to the cabinet, the task force said Mahathir was possibly negligent by failing to file an appeal against the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decision on Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge in 2008.

The task force found that Mahathir had "missed the opportunity" to file the appeal.

This was revealed by Caretaker Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob in a statement today.

Ismail Sabri said the cabinet has decided to continue pursuing the matter at the ICJ and will take "appropriate measures" to defend the country's sovereignty.

The cabinet was briefed on the report on Oct 7 - three days before Parliament was dissolved.

The task force was set up by the cabinet in October last year. Its mandate is to seek the views of international experts on the request to review the ICJ decision.

In 2003, Malaysia and Singapore agreed to submit their claims over Batu Puteh and two nearby maritime features - Middle Rocks and South Ledge - to the ICJ.

By 2008, the ICJ ruled that Singapore owned Batu Puteh - the biggest of the three islands - and handed Middle Rocks to Malaysia. The ICJ did not award South Ledge to either country.

In 2017, Malaysia applied to review the decision, citing fresh evidence. At the time, the attorney-general was Apandi Ali.

The following year, BN was ousted from Putrajaya and Mahathir became prime minister again. One of his first policy decisions was to withdraw the review application.

Incidentally, Apandi was appointed by Ismail Sabri to lead the task force which produced the report.

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