

## **Govt to form RCI on Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks, South Ledge sovereignty**

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The cabinet has decided to form a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) on the sovereignty of Batu Puteh, Batuan Tengah (Middle Rocks), and Tubir Selatan (South Ledge).

The decision was made after a cabinet meeting today.

Batu Puteh, Batuan Tengah and Tubir Selatan are three tiny islands between Johor and Singapore, whose ownership has been disputed.

In 2008, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Batu Puteh belonged to Singapore and Batuan Tengah was Malaysia's, while Tubir Selatan's ownership was left ambiguous.

Malaysia filed a review of the ruling in 2017, but this was later dropped when Pakatan Harapan took power in 2018.

In a statement, the chief secretary to the government Mohd Zuki Ali said that suggested members of the RCI will be brought forth to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong

for consideration.

The suggested members will consist of experts in judiciary, law, and public administration who can conduct a transparent and fair investigation to avoid any conflicts with related parties.

### **Particular interest**

While this was not specified in the statement, the list of RCI members will likely be presented to the next Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar, who will be sworn in on Jan 31.

The current king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, had his last pre-cabinet meeting with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim yesterday and will end his term on Jan 30.

Sovereignty over Batu Puteh is of particular interest to Sultan Ibrahim, who rules Johor.

He had repeatedly criticised Dr Mahathir Mohamad for Harapan's decision to drop the ICJ review in 2018, claiming it had disregarded Johor's sovereignty.

In November 2021 during the Ismail Sabri Yaakob administration, a special

government task force was set up to review the Batu Puteh matter.

In January last year, then attorney-general Idrus Harun said the task force's report found that the withdrawal of the ICJ review was improper.

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