

Dr M: Ridiculous to claim I made 'own decision' on Batu Puteh

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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad denied that he made a unilateral decision to withdraw the application for review and interpretation of the Pulau Batu Puteh judgment in 2018.

Instead, he said the decision was discussed at the cabinet meeting at that time.

“I didn’t make my own decision as alleged. This one is nonsense. I have been briefed by legal experts, including from abroad.

“Then, I brought this issue to the cabinet and told them that Malaysia and Singapore already have an agreement to accept whatever the ICJ (International Court of Justice)’s decision is regarding (Pulau) Batu Puteh,” he said during a press conference at the Perdana Leadership Foundation in Putrajaya.

“This issue is serious if we have made an agreement and then break the promise by filing a review. In future, it will bring disrepute to Malaysia at the international level.

“When I gave my opinion at the cabinet meeting, we already had an agreement before with Singapore and we cannot break our promises. No minister including Deputy Prime Minister Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (at the time) made any objection.

“So, it is nonsense to claim that I made my own decision,” he stressed.

Mahathir was responding to Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Legal and Institutional Reform), Azalina Othman Said, who on April 1 said the prime minister in 2018 who made “secret decisions” was responsible for causing Malaysia to lose Pulau Batu Puteh through the appeal process in an international court.

This morning, Mahathir also appeared before the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) regarding the issue of Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks, and South Ledge.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Legal and Institutional Reform),
Azalina Othman Said

He arrived at the Legal Affairs Division (BHEUU) of the Prime Minister’s Department in Putrajaya at 10.46am and was seen leaving after giving a statement for almost two hours.

“Today’s proceedings are closed, so I cannot say anything, but I will meet with

the press (journalists) to make an explanation regarding my thoughts, which is not a secret. What happens here (proceedings) is a secret,” he said.

Pulau Batu Puteh is a rock stump the size of a football field, located in the Singapore Strait facing the South China Sea. The Horsburgh Lighthouse located there was built by the British in 1851.

It is located close to surrounding islands such as Middle Rocks and South Ledge, which is the main subject of the overlap between Singapore and Malaysia that was discussed through the ICJ.

On May 23, 2008, ICJ ruled that Pulau Batu Puteh belongs to Singapore while Middle Rocks belongs to Malaysia. The status of South Ledge will be determined later.

According to Mahathir, when Malaysia and Singapore brought the matter to the ICJ, both countries agreed to accept whatever decision was made.

“Former minister Syed Hamid Albar signed the agreement on behalf of Malaysia,” he said.

For the record, Azalina previously claimed without naming anyone that a secret decision by a former prime minister was the main reason Malaysia failed in the

case.

She also claimed that the prime minister made his own decision to withdraw the claim on May 28, 2018, two weeks before the trial date in The Hague (Netherlands), without consulting the then attorney-general Mohamed Apandi Ali who was on “garden leave” at the time.

However, Mahathir today insinuated that Azalina had no knowledge of the case. He also accused Apandi of being untrustworthy.

“This Azalina doesn’t know anything about this case. As for Apandi, I gave him ‘garden leave’. I had no reason to talk to him.

“People like Apandi don’t really work. He just wants to satisfy his ‘boss’,” said Mahathir referring to former prime minister Najib Abdul Razak who appointed Apandi as attorney-general to replace Abdul Gani Patail in 2016.

Why is this an issue?

Meanwhile, Mahathir said he did not understand why people made the Pulau Batu Puteh claim an issue when Malaysia was given the right to Middle Rocks.

“I can’t see why people criticise when we get a big Middle Rocks compared to

Pulau Batu Puteh. For me, the ICJ did a good job,” he said.

When asked if he would file a lawsuit against Azalina and Apandi, Mahathir said, “I will think about it first. However, you know lawsuit cases will take a long time like 10 years.

“But in 10 years, I will be in ‘another place’,” said the 98-year-old with a smile.

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