

Dr M snubs Batu Puteh inquiry over chairman Apandi

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PUTRAJAYA: Former attorney general Tan Sri Apandi Ali should not chair the Batu Puteh special task force due to conflict of interest, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The ex-prime minister said he will only cooperate with the task force and attend inquiries if Apandi is removed as chairman.

"I will give the task force my cooperation and will give all the information that is needed at its inquiry sessions.

"I will tell the truth as I am quite

sure a lot of people have given wrong information.

"But as long as Apandi or any other person with a conflict of interest is involved, I will not talk to them," said Dr Mahathir when met by reporters outside the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) yesterday.

The former prime minister came to the AGC for an interview session with the taskforce but left as soon as he found out that Apandi was still its chairman.

"I wrote to the AGC seeking an explanation why Apandi was chosen as chairman of this task force.

"Apandi is a person with involvement in this case, he should not be chairman. Instead, he should be a witness.

"But here, he is appointed as a chairman, which is ridiculous. There is conflict of interest.

"I was invited to attend an inquiry here today, so I came. They told me the chairman was still Apandi.

"If they had said this in a reply to my letters, I wouldn't have even come today," Dr Mahathir told reporters after leaving the AGC here.

On Oct 29 last year, the Cabinet agreed to form the task force after

the Dr Mahathir-led Pakatan Harapan government in 2018 decided to drop an application to review the Batu Puteh case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The government then withdrew the application, which was to have been heard in June that year, to overturn ICJ's ruling awarding legal jurisdiction of Batu Puteh to Singapore in 2008.

Apandi was the attorney general in 2017 when the government applied to review the ICJ decision in 2008, which ruled that Singapore had sovereignty over Batu Puteh.

Commenting on the Johor gov-

ernment's claim that the Pakatan government was to blame for Malaysia's loss of claim to Batu Puteh, Dr Mahathir questioned the sale of land in the state to other countries.

"I want to know why 1,307ha of land in Johor was sold to China.

"This is bigger than just a piece of rock.

"There is also another piece of land in Bandar Maharani that is to be sold to Singapore.

"At the rate of how things are going, there might no longer be a Johor," said the outspoken veteran politician.