

Dr M's walkout 'regrettable'

The Star - 30/8/2022 p.2

Wan Junaidi disappointed with refusal to attend inquiry

PETALING JAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's refusal to attend inquiries by the Batu Puteh special task force is disappointing as the former prime minister was well aware about Tan Sri Apandi Ali's appointment as chairman of the task force, says Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar.

The Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of Parliament and law said the task force only wanted to listen to views regarding the government's decision to withdraw the appeal over the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that Singapore had sovereignty over Batu Puteh.

"Dr Mahathir was informed of the appointment of the chairman of the special task force and he could have declined to attend the session

on Tuesday at the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC)," he said in a statement yesterday.

Wan Junaidi was commenting on Dr Mahathir who immediately left a scheduled morning interview session on Tuesday at the AGC after finding out that Apandi was the chairman of the task force.

He said the panel of interviewers was shocked at Dr Mahathir's decision to leave the AGC abruptly.

"Panellists were shocked and issues that could have been shared by him could not be obtained by the task force," he said.

Wan Junaidi said he was disappointed with Dr Mahathir's refusal to cooperate, but stressed that the task force would continue its commitment and duty to produce a final report involving the sovereignty of

Batu Puteh (Pedra Branca), Batuan Tengah (Middle Rocks) and Tubir Selatan (South Ledge) and the government's decision to retract its appeal.

"The task force will continue its commitment and responsibilities to produce a final report as planned.

"The special task force has carried out its duties for seven months and an interim report was produced, while a final report and follow-up actions are being prepared at the moment.

"It is impossible for me to remove Apandi without any justification if the Cabinet has already decided on his appointment," Wan Junaidi said.

Dr Mahathir said as long as Apandi was still the special task force's chairman, he would not attend any inquiries by the panel.

"Apandi is a person with involvement in this case, he should not be chairman. Instead, he should be a witness," Dr Mahathir said, adding that there was conflict of interest.

He said he was more than willing to cooperate with the task force if Apandi was removed as its chairman.

On Oct 29 last year, the Cabinet agreed to the formation of 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 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.