

Anwar: Dr M should have appealed Batu Puteh decision

PETALING JAYA: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to not appeal the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) ruling in awarding legal jurisdiction of Batu Puteh (or Pedra Branca) to Singapore is "regretful", says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"We have taken a very strong position expressing our regret for the failure of Tun Dr Mahathir to not appeal when we lost the case at the ICJ.

"But that's done, the ICJ has given its decision, and as a country, we have to respect the decision.

"But we have to express that we actually disagree and it was wrong for any prime minister to ignore this issue of sovereignty.

"I understand that we lost the case, but we did not appeal when we should have," he said during a high-tea session with the Malaysian diaspora at the Malaysian High Commission in Singapore.

Anwar was on a one-day visit to the city-state - his first as Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister.

Anwar added that while the country respected the decision, it also expressed its "pain" over the issue.

"But should we go to war over Batu Puteh? No, that is madness," he said.

However, negotiations could be conducted on matters such as the environment or projects there that

could affect Malaysia's sovereignty, he said.

"These are the things that we can do, other than leaving them and then tension continues."

On Feb 3, 2017, the Malaysian government filed an application for a revision of the ICJ's ruling in awarding legal jurisdiction of Batu Puteh to Singapore, while Malaysia owns Middle Rocks and South Ledge belongs to the state in whose territorial waters

it is located.

However, in 2018, the then Pakatan Harapan government led by Dr Mahathir withdrew the application before its scheduled hearing on June 11 that year.

Last Dec 14, after being appointed Prime Minister, Anwar called for the claim on Batu Puteh to be reviewed through immediate and more "meaningful" negotiations with Singapore, without jeopardising bilateral relations.