

DR M DID NOT CONSULT CABINET, SAY 2018 MINISTERS

Then PM denies allegations, says ICJ appeal withdrawn with ministers' knowledge

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A DISPUTE has emerged over the decision to withdraw Malaysia's application to review the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) ruling on Batu Puteh, with former ministers from the 2018 Pakatan Harapan (PH) administration accusing Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad of making the decision unilaterally.

In a joint statement, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu and Anthony Loke claimed that Dr Ma-

hathir made the decision to withdraw Malaysia's application in writing to the solicitor-general on May 21, 2018 without consulting the cabinet.

They further alleged that the cabinet was only informed of the decision two days later, on May 23, 2018, during the first cabinet meeting, where the matter was not discussed but merely "notified" under the agenda item "Hal-hal lain" (other matters).

The three former ministers, who were part of the cabinet during Dr Mahathir's second tenure as prime minister, said the decision had already been made by Dr Mahathir, leaving no room for objection or further discussion.

"We wish to stress here that this was merely a 'pemakluman' and not a discussion to make a decision. As such, there is no issue of anyone objecting or supporting (the decision) as the avenue to make a decision had already been lost when it had been made in writing by Dr Mahathir," they

said.

The trio, which included Dr Wan Azizah as deputy prime minister, Mohamad as defence minister, and Loke as transport minister at the time, added that they were confident other cabinet members present at the meeting could verify their claims.

In response, Dr Mahathir denied the allegations, saying that the decision to withdraw the application was made with the cabinet's knowledge.

"I am somewhat perplexed by the explanation that they did not provide any opinions or views on the issue because I only informed them (of the decision) during the cabinet meeting. Did they need me to explicitly tell them that they should express their opinions or views before they would do so?" he said in a statement issued by his lawyer, Rafique Rashid.

Dr Mahathir said the ministers, by remaining silent during the

meeting, effectively agreed with the decision.

"Are they not aware that any issue raised, informed, or discussed requires each member to give it due attention, and if they have views to express, they should do so during the meeting?"

He also said the minutes of the cabinet meeting recorded that all members, including the three individuals in question, agreed with his position on the matter at the time.

The former prime minister expressed surprise at the timing of the accusations, saying, "It is very puzzling that since 2018, none of them said anything, but as soon as I clarified the actual matter, all of them avoided and deflected responsibility."

This controversy comes after the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) into Malaysia's withdrawal of the ICJ review on Batu Puteh recommended a criminal investigation against Dr Mahathir.