

Dr M: Batu Puteh case withdrawal was collective decision

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PUTRAJAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (*pic*) claims it was a collective Cabinet decision to withdraw the bid to overturn the International Court of Justice's (IJC) ruling on the Batu Puteh case.

He claimed the decision was only made by a Cabinet meeting he chaired in 2018 after much consideration of the views of various experts and through briefing sessions.

He claimed this included consultation of various papers, including one from five senior lawyers from England including those from the

Queen's Counsel (QC) who made it clear that Malaysia's case was weak.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, Dr Mahathir also claimed that an expert by the name of Dr Brendan Plant had similarly explained to him that the case lacked any 'silver bullet' to ensure victory.

He claimed a briefing was also held on the issue which was attended by officials of the Attorney General's Chambers, Wisma Putra and two local lawyers who had been appointed by former attorney general Tan Sri Mohamed Apandi Ali as consult-



ants with Plant.

"At no time during the briefing did anybody contradict the view of Dr Plant that our case was weak or that we had severe risks, if we went ahead with the application.

"At the end of the briefing, I was asked to make a decision but I requested time to make the decision which I subsequently brought up with the Cabinet.

"My Cabinet at the time also did not oppose or reject the idea that we should not go ahead with our bid to overturn the decision.

"That was the final decision, the decision was made by the Cabinet,

not by me alone," the former prime minister said in his Perdana Leadership Foundation office here.

In 2008, the ICJ ruled that Batu Puteh belonged to Singapore while Batuan Tengah belonged to Malaysia, with the sovereignty of Tubir Selatan remaining unclear.

The then-Barisan Nasional government requested from the ICJ an interpretation of the judgment but in 2018, Dr Mahathir's Pakatan Harapan government made the decision to withdraw the country's bid to overturn the ICJ's ruling.

In April, Minister in the Prime Department (Law and Institutional Reforms) Datuk Seri

Azalina Othman Said claimed that Dr Mahathir had made the decision to withdraw "in secret".

Earlier yesterday, the Kuala Lumpur High Court dismissed Dr Mahathir's application for a judicial review seeking open proceedings for the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) on the Handling of Batu Puteh, Batuan Tengah and Tubir Selatan sovereignty issues.

Justice Amarjeet Singh also dismissed his request to prevent Tun Md Raus Sharif from acting as chairman of the RCI, as well as to block Datuk Dr Baljit Singh Sidhu and Datuk Mohammed Ridha Abd Kadir from serving as RCI members.