

Malay voters want Malay rep
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Voters in the predominantly Malay area of Bukit Badong believe that Barisan Nasional could have secured an easy win in the Ijok by-election if it had fielded a Malay candidate.

"If it was a Malay candidate, BN will surely win. They would not need to fork out so much money," said Taman Bukit Badong resident Siti Aishah Kijo, 58.

According to her, the majority of people in the area are BN supporters.

However, she noted that the youths are dissatisfied with the ruling coalition because the politicians are no where to be found as and unless there is an election.

"They say it is like the Aladdin story. In the past, they had nothing but now we are getting whatever we wish for," said the resident.

Another stumbling block for BN, she said, is the poor performance of the late Ijok state assemblyperson K Sivalingam. "He was not very people friendly," she added.

Sivalingam, from MIC, passed away on April 4, paving the way for tomorrow's by-election. The contest will be between BN candidate K Parthiban and Parti Keadilan Rakyat's Khalid Ibrahim.

In the 2004 general election, PKR won Bukit Badong - one of the two Malay-majority districts which the opposition party bagged.

50-50 chance

Bukit Badong resident Mohd Kayat Jam Jam agreed that the locals would preferred a Malay candidate as it would be easy to mingle with that person.

He too expressed disappointment with Sivalingam. "He was very inactive in this area."

Furthermore, he added: "This is a Malay area, we cannot invite an Indian leader to come to the opening ceremony of our mosques and religious schools."

That would be uncomfortable for both him and us, added the 60-year-old cattle breeder.

Mohd Kayat, who had voted nine times in the constituency before, rated tomorrow's contest as 50-50 for both parties.

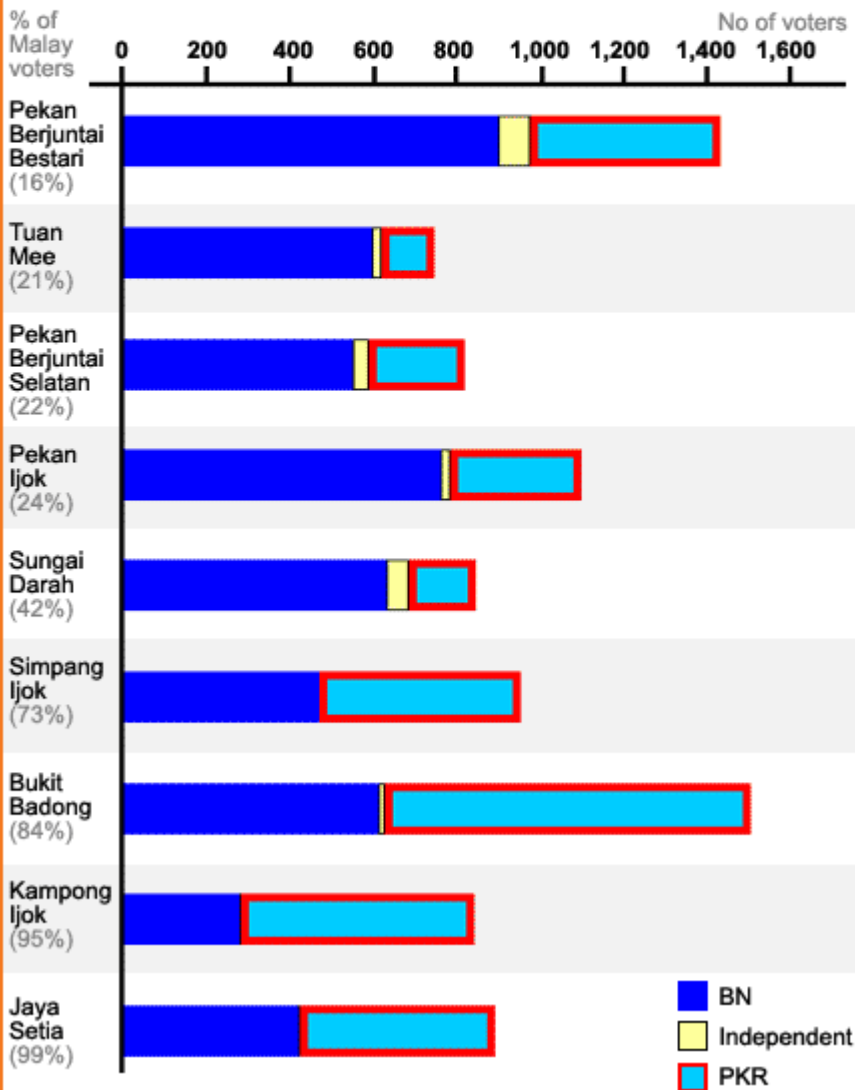
Some of the villagers have also claimed that there has been instances of money being offered by certain politicians to win votes.

Ijok's political landscape

The state seat of Ijok has two major towns – Ijok and Berjantai Bestari (formerly known as Batang Berjantai), and is surrounded by kampongs and plantation housing communities. 95% of Chinese voters are in the two major towns.

The bulk of the Malay voters are in areas around Ijok town, Jaya Setia and Bukit Badong. Most of the Indian voters are around Berjantai Bestari and in the voting districts of Tuan Mee and Sungai Darah.

In 2004, BN won the seat by winning in non-Malay voting districts in Berjantai Bestari, Tuan Mee, Pekan Ijok and Sungai Darah. PKR won convincingly in the two Malay areas of Bukit Badong and Kampong Ijuk and took half the vote in Simpang Ijuk and Jaya Setia.



Azlan Zamhari / Malaysiakini