

Aziz is Barisan Nasional's choice

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BN candidate Abdul Aziz Kiran (centre) with (from left) Raub Umno division chief Datuk Shahruddin Ab Moin, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adrian Yaakob and MCA deputy president Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy after the announcement yesterday.

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RAUB: Raub Umno division secretary Abdul Aziz Kiran is the Barisan Nasional candidate for the Batu Talam by-election.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced his candidacy at the division's headquarters before about 2,000 party members and supporters last night.

Abdul Aziz, 47, thanked the party for nominating him and said he would work hard to ensure victory for BN.

"I am grateful to the leadership for this opportunity," he said, after spending much of the day trying to diffuse talk of his candidacy.

Najib said the party had short-listed seven Umno members from the division.

"But we have only one place. Those

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not picked should accept the decision and work hard to ensure victory."

He quashed rumours that the delay in naming the candidate was due to lobbying.

"No one approached me or state liaison chief Datuk Seri Adrian Yaakob," he said, while joking that the late announcement had only heightened the suspense.

Nominations will be held today at

the district office here, with polling fixed for Jan 28.

Pas and Keadilan are boycotting the by-election while the DAP has announced its intention not to contest.

The seat fell vacant following the death of BN's Tengku Paris Tengku Razlan last month.

Batu Talam has 10,525 registered voters, of whom 77 per cent are Malays, 14 per cent Chinese and 13 per cent Indians and Orang Asli.

At the last polls, Tengku Paris secured the seat for a second term with a 2,761-vote majority over his opponent from Pas.

Meanwhile, Pas deputy president Nasharuddin Mat Isa said the party was not sponsoring any independent candidate.

"Any candidate claiming he has received our blessings is just trying to sabotage us," he said.