

Barisan Nasional hot on the trail of Chinese voters

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RAUB: The Barisan Nasional not only wants to win the Batu Talam by-election, but to win big — which means that the Chinese voters in the mostly Malay constituency have been bombarded with the campaigning.

About 21 per cent of voters in Batu Talam are non-Malay, and for BN, its aim of getting at least a 3,000-vote majority will not succeed without support from about 1,300 Chinese voters in Cheroh, about 20km from here.

An intense campaign has been launched in the area with the BN components' operation centres working at full tilt since Wednesday.

BN deputy chairman Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who visited the operation centres in Cheroh on Wednesday night, said he was confident the non-Malays would support BN candidate Abdul Aziz Mat Kiram.

Abdul Aziz is facing independent Ng Chee Pang in the by-election.

"Our mission now is to locate each voter and ensure that all eligible voters will cast their votes on Jan 28," Najib said.

There are 10,525 voters in Batu Talam with Malays comprising 79 per cent, Chinese 11 per cent, Indians five per cent and Orang Asli five per cent.

At present, there appears to be

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BN candidate Abdul Aziz Mat Kiram

no big issues that could reduce the support of the Chinese, who mainly live in the new village and the centre of the small town of Cheroh. Kindergarten teacher Wong

Wen Foong said the people in Cheroh have little to complain about.

"Maybe the authorities could improve the roads and drainage system further," said the 53-year-old Wong who was born and brought up in Cheroh.

Chen Tai Chye, 65, said most of the Chinese would like to see continuity in development and prefer a candidate from a stronger coalition.

"There are DAP members here but I believe they will also support a candidate who can bring more development in Cheroh," said the mother of three.

Apart from the Chinese, the BN feels it has the Indian and Orang Asli vote, all of whom are the coalition's supporters, sewn up.

Pahang Wanita Umno chief Datuk Maznah Mazlan said the movement would encourage the Orang Asli to vote on Jan 28.

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