

# Najib: Don't overreact to Chinese swing in Ijok

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Chinese community is practical and when the next general election comes along they will know who to support, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

"I am confident that a large proportion of the Chinese support (Barisan Nasional)," said Najib when asked to comment on the apparent drop in Chinese support in the recent Ijok by-election.

Najib said he did not think the vote from the community had dropped as drastically as some had claimed.

"As far as we are concerned, there is good support from the Chinese community. For example, in the Machap by-election, the support was about 63 to 65 per cent. This, despite the fact that it was the DAP which fielded a candidate.

"I don't think we should be too alarmed about this. I don't want this to be such a major issue that it is taken out of proportion. Let us not forget the fact that the majority of Chinese still support BN."

Najib said the current performance of the Barisan Nasional was being benchmarked against the results of the 2004 general election.

"Don't forget that 2004 was an all-time high (for Barisan) and when you get an all-time high, it might slip a little bit. It does not mean that we cannot recover from this position," he said, after speaking at the International Conference on Management of Information Pertaining to Health Crisis.

The event was attended by Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and In-



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is confident that a large proportion of the Chinese support Barisan Nasional.

formation Minister Datuk Seri Zainuddin Maidin.

In last Saturday's by-election, K. Parthiban of the BN beat Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim of Parti Keadilan Rakyat by a majority of 1,850 votes. Despite the improved performance, Chinese support for BN dropped by about 10 per cent.

Last Friday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the coalition would continue to engage the Chinese

community to find out the reasons for their apparent shift in support.

"We wouldn't know why but I think we would be able to find out through our Barisan partners. MCA especially and Gerakan can provide us with the information," Abdullah had said.

Replying to this on Sunday, MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting had attributed the drop to statements made by some leaders which were considered hurtful by

the community; and, the service provided by the previous assemblyman.

While Ong did not say it, many have read his statement about hurtful comments to mean remarks uttered at the Umno Youth assembly last year.

The wielding of the kris by Youth chief Hishammuddin at the movement's assembly last year had also not gone down well with non-Malays.

Yesterday, Hishammuddin played down the incident and said the Ijok by-election should be viewed comprehensively.

"We have to have a proper post-mortem. It is not the only factor, if at all. We can say the same for Malay and Indian voters. Why only look at that issue?"

He said the incident may have been a factor, but people have to be rational about it.

"This is a stale issue. It was raised in Ijok and Machap by the opposition. I hope it is raised in the general election, so people will discuss it and see who raises these symbols to frighten the races."

On the Chinese swing in votes, Hishammuddin said he did not think that was the case.

"To me, there was no swing. Instead of assuming, let us do a post-mortem. I have been discussing the results with the other BN component chiefs."

Asked if the kris will be done away with at future Umno Youth assemblies, Hishammuddin said it would be retained.

"The kris will stay. It is not about an issue where we want to hurt the non-Malays. I have explained that many times. The more we explain it, the more we sensitise the people to it. If it is going to stay, let it be discussed and people will understand what it symbolises."