

# Batu Talam folk go to the polls on Jan 28

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■ By Shahrum Sayuthi and Farrah Naz Karrim  
news@nst.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: Nomination day for the Batu Talam by-election has been fixed for Jan 16 with polling on Jan 28 in the event of a contest.

Election Commission chairman Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman said Sunday had been chosen as polling day to allow voters outside Batu Talam to vote.

He expected 80 per cent voter turnout with results to be announced by 10pm on polling day.

The Batu Talam seat fell vacant on Dec 27 after the state assemblyman, Datuk Tengku Paris Tengku Razlan, 65, died of rectal cancer.

In the 2004 general election, Tengku Paris won by a 2,761-vote majority after securing 5,414 votes to beat Pas candidate Dr Mohamed Nilam Abdul Manap who obtained 2,653 votes.

A total of 10,525 voters comprising 10,511 ordinary voters and 14 postal voters are eligible to vote based on the last electoral roll gazetted on Nov 30, 2006, and verified yesterday.

Bernama quoted Abdul Rashid as saying that Raub District Officer Abdul Kadir Awang Bakar had been appointed returning officer.

A total of 143 commission staff will be deployed in the by-election with 12 polling stations and 23 polling booths.

Abdul Rashid said the commission had set up a task force to monitor and enforce election procedures.

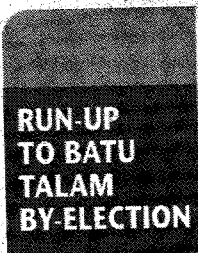
"There is no problem with logistics in this constituency. The roads are good with easy accessibility for vehicles. We don't expect any problems in terms of managing the by-election," he said.

He said the commission will issue a code of ethics agreed upon by political parties and applicable to contesting parties to ensure an orderly by-election.

He said each candidate would

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*Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman  
Election Commission chairman*



be given a spending limit of up to RM100,000.

He reminded contesting parties not to display too many posters as "people know all the political parties which are vying in the by-election."

"This is a small constituency. Just hang them (posters) where people live. Don't hang everywhere like on top of trees in the jungle. And don't hang posters around Raub town," he said.

In Kuantan, the mood is upbeat among Barisan Nasional leaders of another victory over Pas which is likely to nominate a candidate.

Pas will be hard-pressed to make its campaign strategy work as there are no real issues this time.

State Pas commissioner Datuk

Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man did his best to sound upbeat when he laid out Pas' campaign plan based on calls for better governance, eradication of corruption and social ills and promoting the party's Islamic aspirations.

But it is most likely that Batu Talam will remain with the BN, given the mauling that Pas suffered in the last general election when it lost all its six state seats.

The BN election machinery is not overly anxious about the by-election given Umno's strength in the constituency.

Although the BN may not be able to smother the opposition, Batu Talam is still a safe seat for the party.

This was evident from the rather relaxed reaction of the party leaders to the announcement of the by-election.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob summed up the general feeling in the party when he highlighted the similarities of the coming by-election to that of Sanggang (2000) and Ketari (2002) where he led the Barisan Nasional to victory.

"I am confident that Umno and

BN will not face much difficulty in winning this by-election," he said, a statement echoed by Pahang Umno leaders over the past week.

Adnan is by no means over-confident as he knows the feeling on the ground.

Being a rural constituency, voters there are mostly more inclined to be interested in local issues instead of those currently highlighted by Net-savvy urbanites.

These, of course, relate to the fact that the price of rubber and palm oil is high.

The government's insistence on priority to agriculture may have also warmed the hearts of small-holders.

Batu Talam is not that well-known with the exception of a notoriety gained in the Mona Fandey case.

The case saw the gruesome murder of then Batu Talam state assemblyman Datuk Mazlan Idris in July 1993.

Bomoh couple Maznah Ismail aka Mona Fandey and Mohd Afendi Abdul Rahman and their assistant, Juraimi Hussin, were convicted of the murder and later hanged in 2001.