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Najib Leaves Little To Chance in State

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By YANTOULTRA NGUI

SUNGAI LABI, Malaysia—This rice-growing village in Sarawak, like many in this rural state critical to national politics, is attracting government largess as Prime Minister Najib Razak faces the toughest fight of his political career.

A state legislative vote here on Saturday is Mr. Najib's first electoral test since a scandal erupted last summer surrounding a Malaysian development fund he founded that has sparked opposition demands for him to resign.

The leader has left little to chance, pledging on recent visits to Sarawak to invest hundreds of millions of dollars

in government funds toward the state and holding his cabinet meeting there this week as ministers campaigned for local candidates allied to his United Malays National Organization.

Sarawak's vote, the only state election this year, comes as Mr. Najib is under pressure from slowing economic growth due to lower oil prices that led him to slash budgets on ministries by up to half this year. But not in Sarawak. This swath of jungle, rivers and oil fields on western Borneo island that is crucial to his ruling coalition is the beneficiary of a spending surge.

To be sure, ramping up spending before elections has been a fact of political life in

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