

## POLITICAL TALK

## SHARING A TABLE AND STORIES

Kak Ina's stall is the place to be to get the latest stories and catch up on gossip



T.N.  
ALAGESH

## CAMERON HIGHLANDS

**A** FOOD stall operating in front of Sultan Ahmad Shah Mosque in Sungai Koyan here has become the focal point for those involved in the Cameron Highlands by-election to get the latest political gossip.

Since campaigning kicked off on Jan 12, the stall's owner,

known as "Kak Ina" among the locals, has her hands full entertaining customers from morning until evening, sometimes with business continuing until late at night if there is a *ceramah* in the vicinity.

The stall has seen political leaders from across the divide — Pakatan Harapan and Barisan Nasional, including Pas members — sharing a light moment over meals and exchanging pleasantries before going their separate ways.

Recently, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, acting Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Is-

mail Sabri Yaakob, Wanita Umno chief Datuk Dr Noraini Ahmad and Pahang DAP chairman Leong Ngah Ngah shared a table during a break in their campaign rounds.

For journalists, the stall, located 300m from Jalan Sungai Koyan-Cameron Highlands junction, is an ideal spot to not only have meals, but also to get the latest stories and rumours.

Customer Badrol Hanafi, 67, said he had been dropping by the stall daily to meet friends, all of whom are Pas supporters, to share the latest political gossip.

He said the elderly villagers and Felda settlers comprised mostly former servicemen, who believed BN had served them well.

He said voters from Felda Sungai Koyan 1, who voted for Pas in the 14th General Election, had pledged their support for the BN candidate.

"Go around and ask the elderly. Chances are they're either Umno or Pas supporters.

"They believe BN had done a lot for them, we can't discard it entirely.

"The PH government has not even been in power for a year.

"Jelai has always been a BN stronghold and that's not going to change in this by-election.

"BN will probably win with a bigger majority."

Senior voters, such as Badrol, could prove to be the key in determining the winner of the by-election.

Figures show that almost 50 per cent, or 16,131 of the constituency's 32,008 registered voters, are aged between 40 and 69.

This is followed by the 30-to-39 age group, which comprises 7,984 voters or 24.95 per cent, while the youngest voter group, the 21- to 29-year-olds, make up 4,980 or 15.56 per cent of the voters.

Malays make up 33.5 per cent of the voters, Chinese (29.48 per cent), Indians (14.91 per cent), Orang Asli (21.56 per cent), Bumiputera Sabah (0.12 per cent), Bumiputera Sarawak (0.06 per cent) and others (0.37 per cent).

Universiti Putra Malaysia po-

litical analyst Dr Syed Agil Syed Alsagoff said elderly voters would play an important role in deciding where the votes go, giving BN the upper hand.

He said the people in Cameron Highlands preferred a local candidate.

This could give BN candidate Datuk Ramli Mohd Nor an edge.

"The Orang Asli will pick Ramli for sentimental reasons.

"They will be joined by some Malay and Indian voters who may consider a local candidate as giving a new lease of life to the constituency."

Syed Agil said younger voters could be influenced by the trend of voting for a local candidate as they would view the by-election as a platform to display their dissatisfaction with the current government's inability to fulfil GE14 promises, including those catering to the youth.

With the Malay and Orang Asli votes appearing to be firmly on BN's side, the question remains whether Indian and Chinese voters are prepared to throw their support behind it.