

# State's agricultural heartland

Political parties will have to prove they can help the planters, farmers and fishermen of Sabak Bernam to harvest the most votes for GE13.



**Sleepy little town:** Pekan Sabak Bernam is the town centre for Sabak Bernam, Selangor.

## Constituency Watch

By LOH FOON FONG

metro@thestar.com.my

Photos by AZLINA BT ABDULLAH

**T**HE Sabak Bernam parliamentary constituency is located in the north-west of Selangor, bordering Perak.

It is known for its fishing villages as well as padi fields but in recent decades, oil palm plantations have also sprung up.

There are seven small fishing villages (*bagan*) in Sabak Bernam — Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Sungai Pulai, Bagan Nakhoda Omar, Bagan Sungai Tawar, Bagan Parit Baru, Bagan Teluk Rhu and Bagan Sungai Lang.

Although there are more fishing villages in Sabak Bernam than in the Sungai Besar parliamentary constituency, there are fewer fishermen in the former.

Each *bagan* in Sabak Bernam is home to between 50 and 100 fishermen with almost 2,000 in Bagan Sungai Besar alone and another 350 in Sekinchan.

The fishermen in Sabak Bernam are mainly Chinese Teochews while the rest are of Javanese, Banjar, Bugis and Malay descent.

Oil palm plantations have overtaken coconut plantations as the other economic activity and can be found in the Sungai Air Tawar area.

Other types of agriculture that can be found in Sabak Bernam are coconut, cocoa and banana.

The main town for the parliamentary constituency is Pekan Sabak Bernam and among its landmarks are the Sabak Bernam District Museum in Jalan Pasar, adjacent to the District Library building, facing Masjid Jamek.

It displays the history of agriculture and fisher-

ies in the Sabak Bernam district as well as in Selangor in general and has a collection of traditional fishing and agricultural equipment.

Kelong Sabak Bernam, commonly referred to as Kelong Paradise (or Banglo Samudra), an offshore platform, is sought after by anglers who want to fish in peace in the middle of the sea.

The state seats in the Sabak Bernam constituency are Sungai Air Tawar and Sabak.

In the 2008 general election, Datuk Abdul Rahman Bakri won the Sabak Bernam (P92) parliamentary seat by 1,335 votes, defeating PKR candidate Badrulamin Bahron.

However, he has since been sentenced to six years in jail and fined RM400,000 for making false claims for events that never took place in 2009.

Among the names that have been thrown

about as potential candidates are the Sabak Bernam Umno division secretary Mohamed Fasih Fakeh, who happens to be the third cousin of PKR member Dr Abdul Aziz Bari; Sabak Bernam Umno vice-chief Halim Udin; and of late, former deputy science, technology and environment minister Datuk Zainal Dahlan.

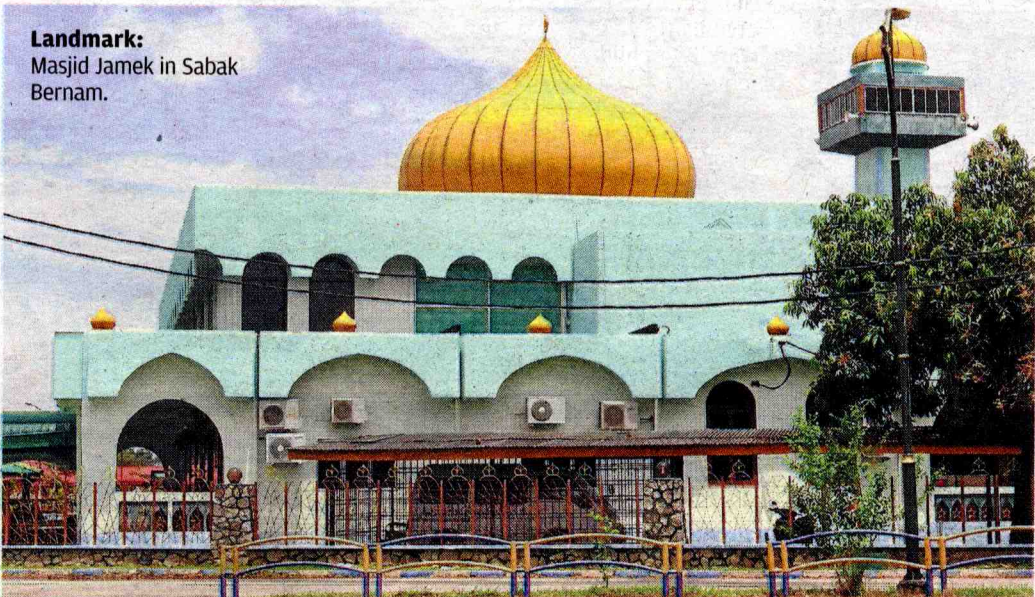
On the other side, PKR member and former law lecturer Dr Abdul Aziz will be contesting the seat.

In the Sungai Air Tawar (N1) state seat, Datuk Raja Ideris @ Raja Idris Raja Ahmad, who won by a narrow majority of 123 votes in 2008, said he was stepping down.

"I have decided not to stand again.

> SEE NEXT PAGE

**Landmark:** Masjid Jamek in Sabak Bernam.



**Busy farmer:** Wak Bani attending to his freshwater fish farm in Parit 12 Barat in Sabak while his padi farm is being prepared for the next planting season.



**Agricultural history:** The Sabak Bernam District Museum is the keeper of agricultural and fishery history as well as traditional fishing equipment.

## More help needed, say fishermen

> FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"I have told the Prime Minister that I have withdrawn from contesting," he said.

Among the potential candidates are Sabak Bernam Umno Youth chief Abd Samad Dawood and his deputy Nizam Ismail.

For Pakatan, a PAS candidate is expected to be fielded and the potential names include Zamri Yahya, coordinating officer for Sungai Air Tawar, former headmaster Wahid Rais and Mohd Jail Ikhsan.

For the Sabak (N2) state seat, it is not known if Barisan assemblyman Datuk Warno Dogol, who scraped through with a 117 majority in 2008, will be fielded again.

Halim Udin, better known as Cikgu Halim, has been tipped as the person who may contest instead of Warno.

Former state assemblyman for Sungai Besar, Ustaz Sallehen Mukhyi (1999-2004) from PAS is said to be a likely contestant for Sabak. He lost to Warno in the 2008 election.

Other potential names from Pakatan for the seat are Sabak Bernam PAS Youth chief Mohd Labis Abdul Jalil and Sabak Bernam PAS committee member Azmi Yusof.

Fisherman Mohammad Ali Othman, 60, a father of eight, said the livelihood of fishermen in Bagan Sungai Pulai in Sungai Besar had been affected by bigger boats crossing the 12th nautical mile boundary and coming nearer to shore.

"The nets they use for trawling, which are called *pukat rimau*, sweep all the fish up and leave nothing for us," he said, adding that their boats could not operate without being obstructed by the nets.

Ali, who is still supporting two children in college and two in secondary school, said that many of the 80 small-time fishermen have abandoned their boats because it would incur losses if they went out to sea.

"We used to get RM300 for a day's catch but in the last six months, we only get about RM70 and it is not even enough to cover our fuel," he said.

He also pointed out some who did not go out to sea sold subsidised diesel to third parties.

Wak Bani Husin, 59, a padi farmer from Sabak, said

**We used to get RM300 for a day's catch but in the last six months, we only get about RM70 and it is not even enough to cover our fuel.**

— MOHAMMAD ALI OTHMAN



he generally did not have problems with his fields and he could reap up to a 10-tonne yield from his 1.2ha of land.

However, the rainy season posed a problem to the padi field as the water is slow to flow out, he said.

"I hope the drainage system can be upgraded," he said.

He said he had made a complaint to the Drainage and Irrigation Department but the problem had yet to be rectified.

Meanwhile, the drop in oil palm prices has affected oil palm planters in Sungai Air Tawar.

An oil palm planter who declined to be named said that oil palm free fruit bunch prices had gone from RM500 per tonne to a low RM360.

He appeals to the Government to step in and cap the price at RM400 per tonne, otherwise it will not be enough to cover the cost of running the plantation, buying fertiliser and paying workers' wages.

He also said that some form of subsidy would help planters sustain economic activity.

A retiree in Sabak who wanted to be known only as Nordin, 66, said the Hospital Sabak Bernam lacks specialists and people had to travel all the way to Teluk Intan (40km) or Klang (100km) to get specialist treatment.

"It's time we have a hospital with specialist doctors," he said.



**Vital crop:** An oil palm plantation in Sabak Bernam. Planters say they want the oil palm free fruit prices controlled.

### SELANGOR

#### P92 SABAK BERNAM

#### 2008 General Election Results

P92 Sabak Bernam		N2 Sabak	
Abdul Rahman Bakri (BN)	12,055	Warno Dogol (BN)	7,001
Badrulamin Bahron (PKR)	10,720	Sallehen Mukhyi (PAS)	6,884
Majority	1,335	Majority	117
Spoilt votes	711	Spoilt votes	390
Total voters	31,381	Total voters	18,655

N1 Sungai Air Tawar	
Raja Ideris@Raja Idris Raja Ahmad (BN)	4,791
Azrul Khakim Suradi (PAS)	4,668
Majority	123
Spoilt votes	263
Total voters	12,726

#### Voter profile

Constituency	Total	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Others
P92 Sabak Bernam	37,390	30,755 (82.3%)	4,683 (12.6%)	1,878 (5.0%)	64 (0.2%)
N1 Sungai Air Tawar	15,224	12,963 (85.2%)	1,761 (11.6%)	481 (3.2%)	19 (0.1%)
N2 Sabak	22,166	17,792 (80.27%)	2,932 (13.2%)	1,397 (6.3%)	45 (0.2%)

Source: Election Commission & others ©The Star Graphics

**Source of livelihood:** A large percentage of the constituency uses Sungai Bernam as their primary source of income.

