

## **68pct turnout as of 2pm**

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KUALA BESUT After 12 days of campaigning, today is the day Kuala Besut voters decide who among two 'local boys' would represent them in the Terengganu state assembly.

In the first by-election since the May 5 national polls, up to 17,713 voters will be choosing between former engineer Tengku Zaihan Che Ku Abdul Rahman who is contesting under the BN ticket, while contractor and businessperson Azlan Yusof contests under PAS' banner.

If BN retains Kuala Besut, then the status quo remains. However should PAS wins, an unprecedented situation arises where BN and Pakatan Rakyat each control exactly half of the 32-member state assembly - a hung assembly.

But it will be a long wait as the Election Commission (EC) is expected to announce the official results only after 10pm, even if it is available earlier, to accommodate for tarawih prayers at night.

### **LIVE REPORTS**

2.15pm According to the Election Commission, 11,987 voters, including those who had voted earlier, had cast their ballots. This means the turnout rate is 67.79 percent.

1.05pm: Looks like PAS supporters are braving the heat, despite the fact that they are fasting, to do some last minute campaigning on the road shoulder near SK Kg Baharu I.

NONEPAS supporter club members were also spotted, while BN supporters were seen relaxing at a nearby tent.

Meanwhile, at SK Kg Nangka, both sides have stopped their last minute campaigning activities.

1.00pm: According to the Election Commission, 11,072 voters, including those who had voted earlier, had cast their ballots. This means the turnout rate is 62.61 percent.

12.30pm: According to an EC officer, as at 12pm, some 9,022 voters, or 54.57 percent, have turned up to cast their ballot.

11.40am: SK Kampung Nangka - Umno publicity chief Ahmad Maslan visits the primary school, where he greets PAS supporters outside the polling station.

This leads many to joke that now even an Umno deputy minister is showing support to PAS.

However, Ahmad Maslan tells Malaysiakini a different story.

"I also greet other PAS supporters at other places (polling station). I was unable to shake their hands during the old days, but I can shake hands with them now.

NONE "The PAS supporters have changed slightly, they are becoming more favourable towards me now," quipped the deputy finance minister.

Supporters from both sides soon begin a shouting match, teasing each other over the fasting month.

"Do you want water?" one PAS supporter shouts.

"We are fasting! You are not!" BN supporters shouts back.

The two groups are separated by the Kuala Besut main road while police personnel and PAS unit amal members stand in between to control the situation.

11am: According to the EC, the number of votes cast today is now 7,356 (44.49 percent). Together with early voting, this brings the total of votes to 8,267 (44.76 percent) so far.

10.45am: According to Election Commission chief Abdul Aziz Yusof, voter turnout is at 31 percent as at 10am, with the number of votes already cast 5,147.

NONE "This is high enough (so far)... I hope this continues," he says during a press conference.

He says early voting stands at 911 votes, making the total vote tally so far 6,059, or 34 percent.

Commenting on the actions of Tengku Zaihan Che Ku Abdul Rahman earlier in the day in showing the media his ballot paper just prior to casting his vote, Abdul Aziz

says the BN candidate should not have done so.

"He should not have done so. Every vote is secret... Votes are secret. Of course a BN candidate will cross (BN).

"It is impossible for the candidate to vote another," he says.

Abdul Aziz further challenges Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli to repeat his allegation against the former and his deputy Wan Ahmad Wan Omar pertaining to the supplier of indelible ink, outside of Parliament.

Rafizi had claimed the two had close links to the alleged supplier of indelible ink during the 13th general election on May 5.

Abdul Aziz deems such allegations as slander and views the accusation towards them, their families and the EC seriously.

"We hope that, if he is a true man, he will repeat the statement outside of Dewan (Rakyat) within a week from today.

"When we get the statement, we will discuss with our lawyers on further action," he says.

However, Rafizi had, on July 18, repeated the allegation outside the Dewan Rakyat.

10.30am: SK Nail - The polling station for Kampung Nail sees supporters from both sides standing in two rows facing each other along the alley leading to the school.

NONEBN's Tengku Zaihan Che Ku Abdul Rahman visits the centre and is greeted by BN supporters.

Meanwhile a PAS supporter who is from Dungun, takes the opportunity to have his picture taken with Tengku Zaihan, clad in PAS' signature green while holding an Azlan Yusof poster.

"I'm okay with him, (this is) healthy campaigning," says the supporter who declined to be named.

There are 1,778 voters in the Kampung Nail polling district, which is also a stronghold of BN.

NONEMeanwhile, there is a 600-metre traffic crawl outside the centre as there is

only one road in and out of the area.

Vehicles also often stop to pickup or drop off passengers, further aggravating the situation, however, traffic police are seen conducting traffic.

There is also a banner featuring a mock ballot paper on the road, with a cross marked in favour of 'Che Long', the PAS candidate's moniker.

9.48am: Kuala Besut jetty - While the atmosphere at all polling centres is upbeat and full of supporters from both sides, the jetty remains calm.

It is observed that there seem to be less people in town compared to previous days, with only tourists seemingly unaffected by the ongoing by-election.

Several tourists are seen having breakfast as they prepare to head to popular Pulau Perhentian for their vacation.

NONE9:30am: SK Kampung Nangka - Outside the polling centre, things heat up as BN supporters, mostly made up of young members, began cheering at the PAS supporters.

However, the latter does not take the bait but just observes the opposing side's actions.

9.15am: SK Kampung Nangka - Ahmad Said's attempt to help wheel in a senior wheelchair-bound voter into the voting centre was protested by an opposing supporter who says the MB is an outsider and should not be allowed in.

This led to a slight confrontation between the two, but an individual successfully calms the situation down, and Ahmad decides not to enter the voting centre.

9.15am: SM Kuala Besut - Wanita MCA vice-chairperson Heng Seai Kie arrives outside the primary school accompanied by local MCA leaders.

Commenting on supporters from both sides of the divide today, she says all are peaceful and harmonious.

"Even though they are from different parties, but they know each other. This is a very different culture (compared to the west coast)," she says.

NONEThere are 148 Chinese voters in Kuala Besut, which makes up less than one percent of the total voters.

Some 114 of them will vote in Sebarang Barat polling district while the rest will vote in Bukit Puteri polling district, near to Jertih.

9.15am: SK Kampung Nangka - Che Long departs after spending 20 minutes mingling with voters.

Not long after, MB Ahmad Said, follows suit and departs the polling centre.

Meanwhile, supporters continue to line the road to the school, showing posters of their respective candidates to arriving voters and passing motorists.

9.08am: SMK Kuala Besut - BN and PAS supporters are lined up across the road - sometimes even side-by-side - leading to the polling centre and the adjacent SK Kuala Besut polling centre to canvass for votes.

NONE They wave long balloons featuring their respective party logos and posters of their candidates at passing motorists.

Despite the close proximity to the two polling centres and the fact that the campaign period ended last night, a passing EC enforcement team vehicle did nothing to stop them but continues to drive onward through the slow traffic.

8.50am: SK Kg Baharu - Terengganu Menteri Besar Ahmad Said arrives and is immediately greeted by calls of prayer by the majority of PAS supporters gathered there.

NONE He responds with a smile, despite the cries of "Long live BN" by BN supporters being drowned out by the PAS' supporters cries.

"I am satisfied with the campaign. Everything went peacefully and I hope this continues until polling ends.

"I hope voters from both parties do not provoke.

"Insya-Allah, BN can defend Kuala Besut," the MB says when met by reporters outside the polling centre.

NONE 8.38am: SK Kg Baharu - PAS candidate Azlan Yusof departs from the polling centre and heads to SK Kampung Nangka - another polling centre located within PAS stronghold.

Meanwhile, outside the school, supporters from both parties line the street while waving their respective candidate's posters in greeting voters that arrive.

8.25am: SK Kg Baharu - PAS campaign manager Hanafiah Mat admits today will see a tough fight between PAS' Azlan, or better known as Che Long, and BN's Tengku Zaihan Che Ku Abdul Rahman.

"Today we get to vote for PAS and vote for Che Long. We get two votes. Fraud, if there is any, will cause us to fall.

"The rakyat excited with Che Long because he is very friendly, for his goodness and generosity that is long known," Hanafiah said when met by Malaysiakini outside the school.

8.20am: SMK Kuala Besut - BN candidate Tengku Zaihan Che Ku Abdul Rahman arrives to cast his vote.

NONEThe former Drainage and Irrigation Department engineer is accompanied by his wife Siti Salbiah Othman, and both are dressed in red traditional Malay attire.

Tengku Zaihan shows his ballot paper when casting his vote, to tell the world that he is voting for his own, BN.

Despite the campaign period being officially over, Tengku Zaihan still urges the people to vote for BN today.

"I advise all voters to come out and vote as early as possible to continue to vote for BN," he says to the press later.

Meanwhile, Che Long exits the voting centre, upon which he greets voters queueing up outside.

8NONE.15am: SK Kampung Baharu - When met by reporters, Azlan Yusof says he is satisfied with his campaign and will await the decision this evening.

"Insya-Allah, PAS will achieve victory in this by-election.

"(We) are confident of winning, either way, we wait (the outcome)," he says.

He admits, however, to suffer from slight nerves as he awoke early for Sahur (pre-dawn meal for Ramadan) and Subuh prayers before heading to the polling centre.

"Ok, I am off to another (voting centre)," he says.

NONE8.05am: SK Kampung Baharu - Che Long is the second to vote, after which he proceeds to meet with other voters there.

Azlan is placed in saluran 2 and is accompanied by his representative Wan Azhar Wan Ahmad.

8.00am: SK Kg Baharu - The centre is open for voting. PAS' Che Long is among the early birds to enter the polling centre.

7.45am: SK Kampung Baharu - PAS' candidate Azlan Yusof arrives with his wife at the polling centre. He is greeted by a group of supporters who were there even earlier than the morning prayer call.

He is accompanied by his representatives Hanafiah Mat and Wan Azhar Wan Ahmad.

The weather is now sunny with a light, cool breeze but weather forecasts predict afternoon showers with a chance of thunderstorms.

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