

Kuala Besut By-election Brings Back Memory Of 1979 By-election
Bernama
15 July, 2013
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KUALA BESUT (Bernama) -- On July 24, Ismail Omar from Kampung Tengah, here will once again walk into the polling centre to choose his 'wakil rakyat' through a by-election in the fasting month of Ramadan, reminding him of a similar incident 34 years ago.

When the by-election for the Kuala Besut state seat was announced following the death of incumbent Dr A. Rahman Mokhtar on June 26, it brought back a feeling of nostalgia to Ismail, 74, who had experienced the campaigning atmosphere and polling during the fasting month for the same seat in 1979.

He said that what was most significant compared to the present campaign was the shortage of cars then which hindered the campaign activities of the candidates especially in the interior areas.

"Of course there were cars in the past, but then the salary was meagre...usually the party candidates would campaign using motorcycles and sometimes they had to walk to the villages which lacked roads," said the retired teacher.

In the 1979 Kuala Besut by-election, Ismail said facilities such as the loud speakers and canopies were hardly used.

"Candidates in the past sometimes spoke without a roof over their head and many lost their voice as they sometimes spoke without using the loud speakers. But many people still turned up to listen to the ceramah despite the lack of sophisticated equipment," he said.

In the 1979 Ramadan by-election for Kuala Besut, the Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate Datuk Wan Zakaria Wan Abdul Rahman won with a 797-vote majority to beat the PAS candidate, Husin Jusoh.

Kampung Gong Nerang resident, Ghani Hassan, 66, said another significant difference then was that there was no cyber war, social media and slanders through the internet.

"In the past, campaigning was simple too. At that time, none of the cabinet ministers came, but now, almost all of them would come here," said the villager who is still healthy and works as a heavy machinery driver at a sawmill, here.

He said most of the campaigning then were carried out in the morning and after the Terawih prayers.

Rafeah Awang Hamat, 62, who had helped BN in the campaign during the 1979 by-election, said party workers who had come to help then were limited to those from Kelantan and Pahang only, compared to the present where the workers came from all over the country.

"This town is usually not busy, but when the by-election comes, the roads are busy with cars coming from all parts of the country.

"But the good thing is that it gives extra income to the entrepreneurs especially those selling food during the fasting month," said the Kampung Gong Nering resident, here.

Wan Zakaria, the BN candidate in the 1979 by-election, felt that the poll during the Ramadan month should be more courteous to win the hearts of the voters.

The 2013 Kuala Besut by-election on July 24 will see a straight fight between the BN candidate, Tengku Zaihan Che Ku Abdul Rahman and Endot@Azlan Yusof from PAS.

The Kuala Besut state constituency has 17,683 voters.

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Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v7/newsindex.php?id=963248>