

In Kuala Besut, PAS, Umno settle on new faces
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By The Malaysian Insider

PAS and Umno appear to have agreed on at least one point for the Kuala Besut by-election. Both parties have nominated new faces for the July 24 by-election, the first since Election 2013.

Barisan Nasional (BN) has nominated 37-year-old Tengku Zahrin Che Ku Abd Rahman, an engineer with the Drainage and Irrigation Department, while PAS chose businessman Azlan Yusof, 48, who is popularly known as Che Long.

It is both their political debut in an election but PAS has an uphill battle as BN won the rural seat with a 2,434 vote majority in the May 5 general elections.

Both candidates have their respective strengths going into battle in the 12-day campaign period after nomination day this Friday, July 12.

Tengku Zaihan is seen as relevant to the main demographic of fishermen in Kuala Besut, the sleepy enclave that is the jumping point to several resort islands off the Terengganu coast, including Pulau Perhentian.

The Kuala Besut residents' main issue is the shallow river mouth due to silting that has made it difficult for deep-sea fishing boats to access the main jetty to land their catch.

Most deep-sea fishermen have now resorted to landing their catch in the Tok Bali port in neighbouring Kelantan which does not face a silt problem rather than in Kuala Besut.

But PAS's Che Long has deep roots in Kampung Baru in Kuala Besut and could prove a formidable opponent. His nomination has broken the local PAS tradition of fielding candidates from among religious teachers or ustaz.

Party sources said Che Long and two religious teachers were shortlisted to be the candidates after Kuala Besut assemblyman Dr A. Rahman Mokhtar passed away on June 26 due to a lung disease.

In the 13th general election, Rahman received 8,809 votes while his rival from PAS, Napisah Ismail, got 6,375 votes.

But Che Long was chosen as his business acumen was seen relevant with Kuala Besut voters who are involved in tourism and small scale enterprises of the fishermen and farmers in the area such as keropok production.

PAS by-election director Datuk Husam Musa told reporters that several factors were considered in choosing a candidate for Kuala Besut.

"The Kuala Besut residents are among the poorest in Terengganu as there isn't much economic help that has benefitted them," he said, pointing out the PAS candidate can help if elected.

In short, the skills and abilities of both rival candidates will be a boon to the voters if any of

them win the by-election. For PAS, the added advantage is a deadlock in the 32-seat state assembly which currently stands at 16 BN assemblymen and 15 from Pakatan Rakyat. - July 10, 2013.

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