

Clannish coastal voters find PAS too fresh a face
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By Muzliza Mustafa

In coastal Malaysia your clan can count. And this is something PAS candidate Azlan Yusof is learning as he seeks to make inroads over the next 10 days against the Barisan Nasional in the battle for Kuala Besut.

His opponent, Tengku Zaihan Che Ku Abd Rahman, comes from the coastal community which is lining up behind their clansman.

"Although he is a new face, his family background and being born in a coastline community, makes him one of us.

"We do not know him. But we know his father and we know who he belongs with. And here, we support people from our clan. The elderly here are like that," said Johari Ahmad, who counts himself as a coastal person.

The coastal community (orang pantai) are mainly fishermen and boatmen while the rural community (orang darat) are involved in either agriculture or business.

Johari's view is shared by Rohani Mohd Yaakob, 41.

"He is like the late Dr A. Rahman, who was born in our coastal community," said Rohani.

Her husband, Khalid Jamal, 48, agreed with her.

"The only thing is, Zaihan cannot be complacent. We do not know him well. We have heard of him but we want him to be able to serve the people like Dr Rahman," he said. So it is a tough task ahead for PAS' Azlan, who is popularly known here as Che Long, as he belongs to the rural community. He probably will get some votes from the young voters from coastal communities but will it be enough to catapult him to win the by-election?

Johari said although now the young people in coastal areas are more open-minded, the clan support is still strong.

"I cannot say he will get 100 per cent votes from us but 70 per cent is confirmed and they are in a majority here in Kuala Besut," he said.

Khalid noted that BN also gave aid to coastal folk.

"They took care of the elderly and single mothers," he said.

Voting for the by election is on July 24, when 17,683 registered voters will cast their votes.

If PAS wins in the by-election, it would lead to a hung state assembly with 16 seats for each side. - July 14, 2013.

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