

**By-Election Candidates Early Birds At Polling
Bernama
24 July, 2013**

KUALA BESUT, July 24 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) and PAS candidates of the Kuala Besut state by-election were among the early birds who voted when polling opened at 8 am Wednesday.

BN candidate Tengku Zaihan Che Ku Abd Rahman cast his vote at 8.15 am at the polling station at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Kuala Besut.

The 37-year-old engineer, clad in a red baju melayu, was accompanied by his wife, Siti Salbiah Osman, who wore a matching red baju kurung.

PAS candidate Endot alias Azlan Yusof voted at 8.05 am at the polling station at Sekolah Kebangsaan Kampung Baharu.

Che Long, 48, as the businessman is better known as, was accompanied by his wife, Zabiyah Muhammad, campaign manager Hanafiah Mat and PAS Dewan Ulama secretary Datuk Nik Zawawi Nik Salleh. Tengku Zaihan, fondly known as Abe Ku among the constituents, and Siti Salbiah, 34, arrived at the polling station at 8 am.

After casting his ballot, Tengku Zaihan chatted with the other voters before leaving to check on the voting process at the other polling stations.

Eight polling stations have been opened for the by-election, one of them on Perhentian Island.

Asked why he and his wife chose to wear red attire today, Tengku Zaihan said: "Red is the symbol for courage"

He also took the opportunity to urge voters to come out early and exercise their right.

"The voting process is going on smoothly. I am confident of victory based on the support I have received," he said.

Azlan, meanwhile, also said that he was hopeful of a victory.

"Let's wait for the result," he said, adding that he had been a little nervous voting as a candidate. Azlan and his wife Zabiyah, 44, had arrived at their polling station at 7.45 am, accompanied by several party supporters.

Azlan was the second in the second stream to vote. The polling station has five streams. A check at SMK Kuala Besut found that the polling station was crowded with hundreds of voters as early as 7 am as the electorate took the opportunity to come out early to vote.

The by-election is a straight fight between Tengku Zaihan and Azlan. It has been necessitated by the death of assemblyman Dr A. Rahman Mokhtar of the BN on June 26.

Rahman had retained the seat for the BN in the general election in May by beating Napisah Ismail of PAS with a majority of 2,434 votes.

The official result of the by-election is expected to be announced after 10 pm today to enable Muslim leaders and supporters of the contesting parties to perform their 'tarawih' prayers of the Ramadan fasting month.

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