

'Warlords' the biggest problem in Umno, says Zahid

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Umno vice-president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi considers the party's "warlords" to be the its "biggest problem".

"'Warlords' have become a big problem in Umno, as they expect political rewards or dividends to be given to them.

"This is especially (prevalent) among those with positions as they believe that they should be fielded in the general elections," Zahid said in an interview published in *New Sunday Times* today.

He said these "warlords" may insist on their candidacy even if the voters prefer "likeable or winnable candidates" to represent Umno.

The Sungai Besar and Kuala Kangsar by-elections managed to buck this trend and convinced "warlords" on the need to field the right candidates, said Zahid.

"Even the warlords admitted that only winnable candidates should be given preference. In the end, we were successful in our campaign and other political strategies.

"I consider warlords to be the biggest problem in the party and if we manage to overcome them, then we will be able to place ourselves in a good political life cycle," he said.

He said there were "a lot" of "likeable" and "winnable" candidates in Umno, "if the warlords can accept reality".

Weathering another crisis

Asked on Umno's challenges in facing Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, Zahid said his party had overcome many crises before because the party's core principles were strong.

He said Umno had endured major crises in 1987 and again in 1999 but still emerged victorious during the general election.

"Today's situation is the fourth (major crisis) that we are facing. (Even) when party founder Onn Jaafar himself left the party, it has been proven that our principles, especially among the leadership, held the party together," he said.

Presently, said Zahid, Umno's internal political climate was at its "level best", but outside the party it was different.

He said Umno members must be able to accept criticisms in order to move forward.

"We must be grounded in reality when addressing these matters. We should not remain in

our comfort zones.

"We must anticipate that what is happening outside the party is not something extraordinary, but rather, extraordinary issues requiring extraordinary approaches," he said.

The interview was conducted in conjunction with the Umno annual general assembly, which begins on Tuesday.

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