

## **Nazri warns of 2008 repeat if Umno infighting continues**

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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 1 — Continued infighting among Umno members in their scramble to become election candidates could lead to a possible repeat of the 2008 electoral debacle when the next polls arrives, warns a senior party leader ahead of its annual congress today.

Umno supreme council member Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz said members have not learned from the mistakes of 2008 where he said incessant "infighting and backstabbing" pushed the party and the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) to lose its two-thirds federal majority and four states.

He accused members of being unwilling to sacrifice themselves for party and national good, claiming "they have no qualms at all to ensure that a candidate loses if it is not them (if they are not chosen)".

Nazri (picture), a senior Cabinet minister in the Najib administration and Padang Rengas MP, singled out Umno's state chapters of Perlis, Terengganu and Sabah as examples of heavy infighting.

"You know, it is a perennial problem whenever we approach the election, there is always going to be problems about candidates.

"In the election, if the opposition wins the seat, it is not them winning but Barisan Nasional losing. Meaning, there is no unity among us... there is sabotage and the party machinery cannot run properly and then we lose," he told The Malaysian Insider.

"So Umno members need to be reminded again and again and again and again because they have no qualms at all to ensure that a candidate loses if it is not them," he said.

Nazri was responding to Datuk Seri Najib Razak's pre-general assembly briefing two nights ago to Umno's top echelon where the party president urged members to prioritise unity above self-interest and the general election above the party election.

Najib, who is also prime minister, sounded the election war drums and called on all members to be reminded of the importance of fielding "winnable candidates" in an election he predicted would be "extraordinary".

"So this (infighting) has to stop. We were hoping that what happened in 2008 would make them realise (their mistakes)... but I don't think they have realised, they have not realised," Nazri said.

He added that apart from national issues, party infighting and sabotage, including party members voting against BN, had added substantially to the ruling pact's dismal performance in Election 2008.

"So it is only appropriate for the PM to give them this reminder because I believe this is the last meeting (AGM) before the election," Nazri said.

He added however that infighting was not unique to Umno alone but also occurs in other BN component parties and the opposition coalition of Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

Speculation is rife that Najib is positioning his administration for polls expected by March next year.

The prime minister has been doling out promises of reform and cash handouts in his newly-unveiled Budget as well as policies that appear to be tailored to garner support ahead of the polls.

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