

SUN - 2 AUG 2001

## PM did not seek meeting with Bush: Abdullah

**KUALA LUMPUR, Wed:** Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has not requested or indicated a wish to meet US President George W. Bush.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad said there is no need for the prime minister to meet Bush, "so why is the need for them to state conditions"?

"Don't they know the opposition has so much freedom to express or insult people and make allegations, even win general elections

and form a government?"

He was commenting on a news report that US officials would like to see an improvement in three areas before Mahathir can meet Bush. The three concern the treatment of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the detention of six Keadilan leaders under the Internal Security Act and delays in the distribution of foreign magazines, including the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *Asiaweek*.

Speaking at the lobby of Parliament House, Abdullah said the US was making comments without realising what was really happening in Malaysia.

"I don't understand what the US wants," he said.

Yesterday, Foreign Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar said Malaysia's bilateral ties with the US are based on the understanding that both countries are sovereign and do not interfere in each other's internal affairs.