

Umno supreme council backs PM's leadership

• By V. Vasudevan and Azura Abas

news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Umno's supreme council threw its support behind Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday — a sign that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's, outburst against the Prime Minister has not split the party's opinion-makers.

After the three-hour meeting, held at the Umno headquarters in Putra World Trade Centre here, deputy president Daluk Seri Najib Razak made it clear that the issue did not have a divisive effect.

"Following today's meeting, the supreme council made the unanimous decision to fully support the leadership of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi; as Prime Minister and president of Umno," he said.

"The council also confirms that this stand is backed by all leaders of Umno at national and state levels. It must be clearly stated that there are no factions in Umno."

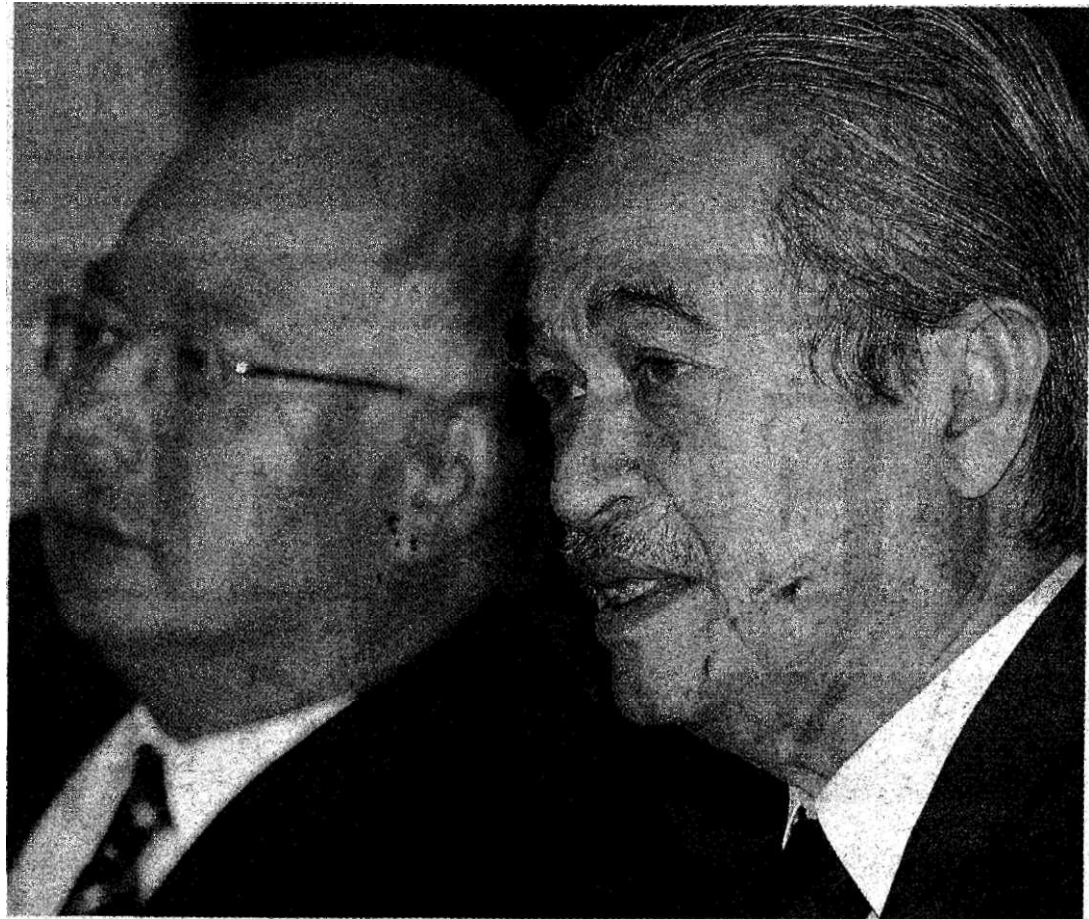
Dr Mahathir, who handed power to Abdullah in 2003, triggered fears of a split within Umno after he accused his successor of reversing his policies and betraying his trust.

His main grouse was the Government's decision to halt several projects, including a bridge to replace the Causeway.

Abdullah chaired the, council meeting yesterday but contrary to swirling rumours, there was no discussion of punitive measures to be taken against Dr Mahathir for his attack on the administration.

At the outset, the PM touched on Mahathir's outburst and told members what the Government was doing to address issues raised by the former PM.

Council members weighed in with their comments and backed the move to allow certain min-



Abdullah with Najib at a Press conference after the Umno supreme council meeting yesterday,

istries and government, agencies to unravel any confusion among the public.

At a Press conference later, Najib said the council's unanimous support was based, on three important factors.

• I acknowledge the strong-mandate given to Abdullah by Malaysians in the 2004 general elections. "The people's mandate to Abdullah as Prime Minister in the 2004 election was very convincing. The people's trust is *suci*

(sacred), which we have to fulfil," he said.

That Abdullah's leadership was most significant in realising the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP).

"The plan is very important for the people's prosperity and the nation's future," Najib said.

"Abdullah's leadership is very important to realise the plan."

• That a united political leadership was needed if the goals of Vision 2020 were to be achieved,

In that connection, he said, the

Government was entitled to come up with any policy or decision based on current situations.

Referring to Dr Mahathir's criticism of the Abdullah administration, Najib said every Umno leader had to explain to the people the issues raised with the correct facts.

"If criticism arises from any quarters, including Dr Mahathir or other leaders, we have to give an objective and factual explanation," Najib said.