

Striving for the nation's well-being

• By NST reporters
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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Incoming Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had a stark warning for Umno leaders whose massive general election victory in March might have gone to their heads: Abuse your power and you will lose it soon enough.

In his first-ever address to top Umno leaders and delegates to the party's general assembly, which begins Thursday, Abdullah laid out his principles and priorities as the leader of the Malays and Malaysians.

His objective, he said, was to use the powers vested in him as Prime Minister and Umno President "to bring well-being to the country and its people".

Stating that he had a huge responsibility as a leader and would be judged in both this world and the hereafter, Abdullah said he "shuddered" to think of the grief he might cause to people if he abused his position.

Delegates who attended the closed-door briefing said Abdullah pledged he would

not misuse his powers, telling the Umno leaders gathered not to do so either.

He told them that while they had scored an astounding electoral victory, winning more than 90 per cent of the seats along with the other components of the Barisan Nasional, their power was only "on loan" and any abuse would lead to them losing these powers.

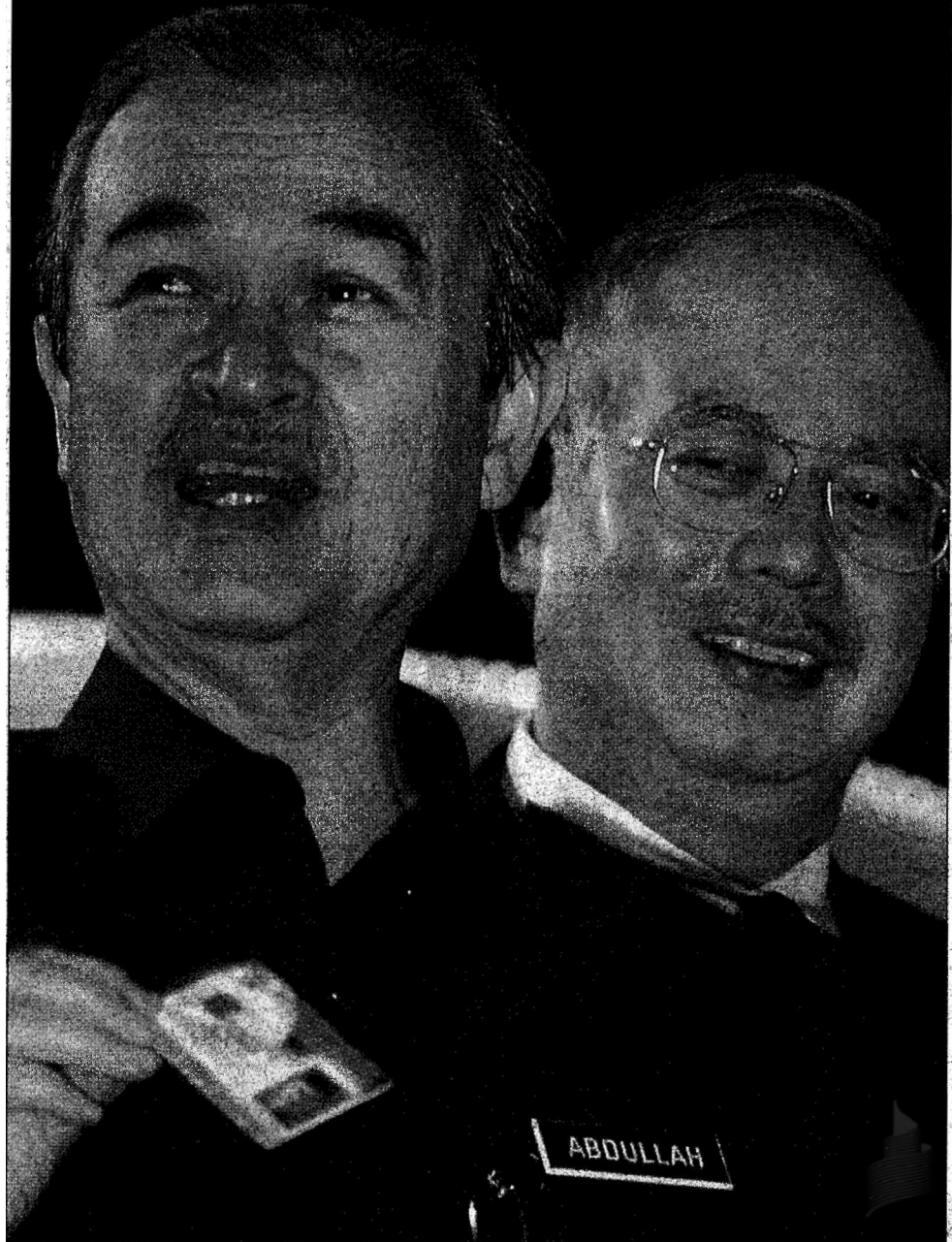
Abdullah was addressing the leaders at the customary pre-council meeting with all 2,500 delegates, including heads of the Wanita, Youth and Puteri wings and members of the powerful decision-making Supreme Council.

This was his first such address since he became Prime Minister and Umno acting president last October.

"We should always be grateful for what we have. I pray that my leadership will bring well-being to the nation and people," he was quoted as telling the delegates at the one-hour briefing.

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THE SMART WAY: Abdullah showing the smartcard used to gain entry to the Umno general assembly and to vote in the party polls, while Najib looks on. — NST picture by Salim Saari

PM: Be just, fair and trustworthy

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Abdullah said they should not think they could do what they pleased just because they had the power.

Power, he told them, must be used to help the country and Malaysians in the best possible ways.

The delegates said Abdullah humbly acknowledged that there were many people wiser than him, but it was God's will that he had been chosen to be Prime Minister and leader of Umno.

Abdullah said the people of Malaysia had voted in Umno leaders because they

had confidence in the party, and it was precisely for that reason that these leaders had to be fair and just in discharging their duties.

Delegates said Abdullah told them Islam required Muslim leaders to be trustworthy, just and impartial.

Abdullah also said Umno would continue, as it had since its inception, to pursue the "Malay agenda" to better the lot of Bumiputeras.

But each and every Malay individual had to support this agenda, he said, as the Government could not do it alone.

Abdullah also dwelled at length on the development of the agriculture sector, which would improve the livelihood

of the Malays, the majority of whom were in rural areas and dependent on agro-based industries.

Abdullah said the Government was also concerned by the poor performance of Malay students in schools and institutes of higher learning, and would continue to address the problem.

At a Press conference later, Abdullah said Umno had the responsibility to fight and champion the future of the Malays.

On what type of leaders he wanted to see Umno delegates vote into office at the coming party polls, Abdullah said they must choose people of calibre.