

# Abdullah: I have a major task ahead

BY JOHAN FERNANDEZ

WASHINGTON: The Prime Minister has likened his election as Umno president as a major task ahead to build a strong and solid party.

"I am overwhelmed by the strong show of support and this means that I have now been entrusted with a major task ahead," an elated Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said on Sunday.

Abdullah said this when asked by Malaysian journalists, covering His visit to Washington to meet United States President George W. Bush and senior US administration officials, to comment on his



being elected unopposed as Umno president.

"I believe that with the strong and solid support that I've received at all levels I will be able to make Umno a strong and solid party that will achieve our struggle for the nation, religion and race," he said.

Abdullah won the Umno presidency unopposed after he received 173 nominations

while his only conceivable challenger, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, got one from his own Gua Musang division.

Abdullah said the victory also strengthened his position as the chairman of Barisan Nasional.

He said he was also thankful for the co-operation and unity of Umno members that resulted in the victory for his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak who also won unopposed as deputy party president.

He also congratulated Wanita chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and her deputy Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, and Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and his deputy Khairy Jamaluddin on their victories.

To a question that without contest Umno elections were no more exciting, Abdullah said "For me, it is not necessarily so. Sometimes because of the contests many negative and sad things happened, as had happened before."

At a dinner in his honour at the home of Malaysia's Ambassador to the United States Datuk Ghazzali Sheikh Khalid, the Prime Minister was presented with two cakes to commemorate his victory.

Apart from Bush, Abdullah will be meeting Secretary of State Colin Powell, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, Congress members and business leaders.