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Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin before taking office as prime minister.

# PM gets backing from BN, Umno supreme councils

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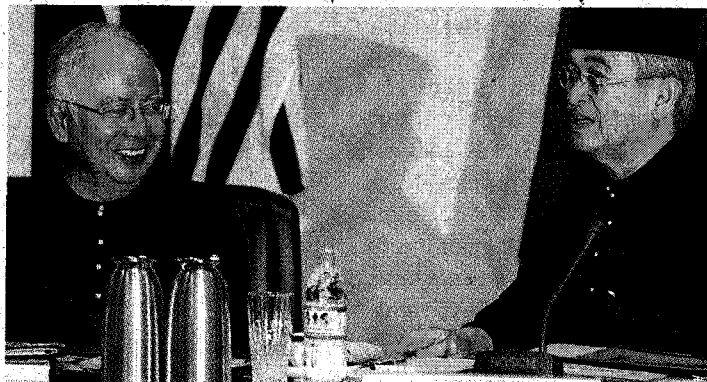
**KUALA LUMPUR:** Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who received full backing from both the Umno and BN supreme councils to continue as their leader, was sworn in as prime minister for a new five-year term yesterday.

At a ceremony at Istana Negara, witnessed by his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Razak and other dignitaries, Abdullah took the oath of office before Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Nur Zahirah.

At the Umno supreme council meeting, Abdullah was greeted with a standing ovation and shouts of "Hidup Pak Lah" (Long Live Pak Lah) as he walked in.

When the meeting started, Najib reiterated his support for Abdullah's leadership and urged Umno leaders and members to close ranks behind the party president and work together to face the new challenges posed by the BN's poor showing in Saturday's general election.

Najib's comments set the tone for the meeting which saw expres-



Datuk Seri Najib Razak (left) and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the Umno supreme council meeting yesterday.

sions of undivided support for the president. However, members also spoke at length on the weaknesses and the need for change to meet the expectations of Malaysians who had shown their displeasure through the ballot box.

The BN won 140 parliamentary seats against the opposition's 82 seats, its worst showing since 1969.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had on Sunday asked Abdullah to take responsibility for the BN's poor showing and step down.

But the supreme council of Um-

no and the BN — the top decision-making bodies for the party and coalition — rejected any such notion and instead pledged to give their full support to Abdullah.

Najib told a news conference that both Umno and the BN resolved to back Abdullah firmly.

The Umno supreme council also gave full support to Abdullah to continue leading the party, Najib said.

"This is important to maintain investors' confidence in our country and to allow the party to face challenges," Najib said after the back-to-back meetings of both



supreme councils.

Najib said this solid backing for Abdullah should put a stop to speculation on his leadership of the party and coalition.

"We hope there will be no doubt about the leadership in Umno or any speculation that there would be a leadership change."

Abdullah, at the same news conference, said the coalition was ready to govern Malaysia despite the reduced number of seats.

"We have a strong majority and have the capability to implement promises made in our manifesto.

"We were eight seats short of securing a two-thirds majority but we accept the decision," he said.