

# Leaders: 'Pak Lah' shows that PM is accessible

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CALLING Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi by his nickname "Pak Lah" will not denigrate his position as Prime Minister, several political and community leaders said in a front-page report in *Utusan Malaysia*.

They said "Pak Lah" should continue to be used as it was more friendly and readily recognisable within and outside the country.

The leaders said the name actually portrayed Abdullah as a leader who is accessible to the people.

However, they agreed that everyone, including the media, should show their respect towards him and use his full name together with his titles during official functions.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, who was also quoted in the report, said the name "Pak Lah" had been used so often that almost every foreign leader now referred to

Abdullah by that name.

"(Thai Prime Minister) Thaksin (Shinawatra), (Singapore Prime Minister) Goh Chok Tong and Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei also call him Pak Lah.

"In fact, even Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad calls him Pak Lah despite being older than him," Syed Hamid said.

He added that the name "Pak Lah" could not be compared to Dr Mahathir's pen name, "Che Det," as Dr Mahathir only used it in writing.

The daily quoted Syed Hamid when commenting on International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz's call to Malaysians, including the media, to refrain from calling the Prime Minister "Pak Lah."

Rafidah had said that it would be more proper for the Prime Minister to be referred to as "Datuk Seri Abdullah" in order to show him respect as the country's leader.

She also said that the use of "Pak Lah" by the younger generation and outsiders was deemed inappropriate.

Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung (GPMS) president Datuk Suhaimi Ibrahim said the Prime Minister should rightly be referred to by his full name and titles.

"However, even during formal situations, it is difficult for those who are used to calling him Pak Lah to refrain from doing so because Pak Lah himself uses it during conversations," he said.

Puteri Umno chief Datuk Azalina Othman Said said she understood Rafidah's call and agreed that it would not be appropriate for foreigners, especially the foreign media, to call him "Pak Lah."

"Who are they to call our Prime Minister 'Pak Lah'? But then, it could also be that they see his humility as his strength," she said.