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Double celebration for Abdullah

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - It was a special open house for Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and wife Datuk Seri Endon Mahmood at Hotel Mutiara today.

Besides being the maiden open house hosted by the Prime Minister for diplomats, dignitaries and special guests, it was also a surprise celebration of his 64th birthday today.

Abdullah, who was busy receiving guests, looked pleasantly surprised when guests, including ministers, Members of Parliament and dignitaries, sang Happy Birthday to him about 11am.

The Prime Minister also received beautifully decorated cakes from some of his guests in conjunction with Hari Raya and his birthday.

At 3pm, Abdullah cut a birthday cake with Endon, their daughter Nori and son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin, son Kamaluddin and daughter-in-law Azrene Abdullah.

Their grandchildren - Alya, Amira, Arif and Ahmad - were also present.

Abdullah then cut the cake and personally served guests.

A selection of songs from the 60's including The Beatles' When I'm Sixty-Four, A Little Help From My Friend, Let It Be and Yesterday were specially selected by his family and played for Abdullah, who is a Beatles' fan.

Guests approached him later to wish him Selamat Hari Raya and Happy Birthday.

Some took the opportunity to be photographed with Abdullah.

"I wish the Prime Minister prosperity, success and long life. We are grateful to him for his friendship with India and we're confident he will continue to strengthen our bilateral ties," Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri said.

Sri Lankan High Commissioner Rosy Senanayake also extended her birthday greetings to Abdullah, adding: "I look forward to working here with his administration."

Senegal ambassador Amadou Faye hoped Abdullah would continue in the path of his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in strengthening ties with African countries.