

Endon's tradition of gift-giving lives on

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BEST WISHES: Abdullah wishing Happy Deepavali to security officer Vanivail Sinnapayal during the gift presentation ceremony at the Prime Minister's office in Putrajaya yesterday. With them are (from left) Thajuddeen, Nori and Leela.

PUTRAJAYA: It used to be one of Datin Seri Paduka Endon Mahmood's favourite activities during Ramadan – handing over Hari Raya gifts to staff at her husband's office.

In fact, just days before she passed away, Endon made sure all the gifts were ready for distribution at the Prime Minister's office.

Yesterday the tradition, started by Endon when her husband was Deputy Prime Minister, was continued by Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and their daughter, Nori.

Both Abdullah and Nori were cheerful throughout the event as they personally handed over gifts of *batik sarung*, rice and hampers to more than 100 staff members for the Deepavali

and Hari Raya celebrations. Also present were Endon's good friend Leela Mohd Ali and principal private secretary to the Prime Minister Datuk Thajuddeen Wahab.

As the staff were queuing to receive their gifts, Nori was seen hugging a tearful Hamidah Samsuddin as she handed over her gifts.

Hamidah, who is special assistant to the press officer, said she started working with Abdullah since 1999 and had been receiving the gifts personally from Endon every year.

"I cried because when I offered my condolence to Nori, she hugged me. I have known her even before she got married. I will treasure the *telekung* (Muslim women praying attire) that I

received," she added.

Thajuddeen, in his speech, said the staff were happy to receive the gifts from Abdullah and Nori personally.

"I can see that the Prime Minister is so spirited with Nori present. The gifts were already planned when Kak Endon was undergoing treatment in Los Angeles. She did not want anybody to borrow money just to celebrate Raya," Thajuddeen added.

Abdullah said his wife had also prepared gifts for the poor in his parliamentary constituency of Kepala Batas.

"She told me she wanted to give them herself but unfortunately it was not meant to be," he said.

Nori is expected to help Abdullah in some of his official roles locally.