

'I fell in love ... just recently'

The Star - 7/6/2007

PM speaks to reporters about his weekend marriage and bride-to-be

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi chose Jeanne Abdullah to be his future wife because they are compatible and they love each other.

"She can take care of me and she can be my companion. That is most important," the jovial Prime Minister told a packed press conference after the official opening of SMIDEX 2007 and Small and Medium Enterprises Convention here yesterday.

Abdullah, who will marry Jeanne in a private ceremony at Seri Perdana on Saturday, was also asked whether they had "chemistry". He replied laughingly: "Dah... bincang itu pulak? (Sigh ... why go into that?)"

Abdullah, who was smiling and laughing throughout the press conference, described his future wife as down-to-earth, caring and friendly.

"Kak Endon (the late Datin Seri Paduka Endon Mahmood) loved her. Otherwise she would not have asked her to manage our official residence," he added.

Asked when he first knew Jeanne and how long they had known each other, Abdullah said: "Maybe at least 20 years. She is actually part of the family. She is Kak Endon's sister-in-law. She was married to her younger brother but they separated more than 15 years ago."

On when he started falling in love with Jeanne, he blushed and said: "Just recently."

Pressed further whether he had been in love for over a year, he replied: "Less than one year."

Asked to clarify whether the rumours that the late Endon had asked him to marry Jeanne before she passed away, he replied: "Kak Endon tak adalah kata wasiat. (The late Endon did not bequeath such as wish)."

He said neither was there any message or recommendation.

On when he proposed to Jeanne and whether it was on bended knee, he said: "I wish I can remember. I'm trying to remember when it was."

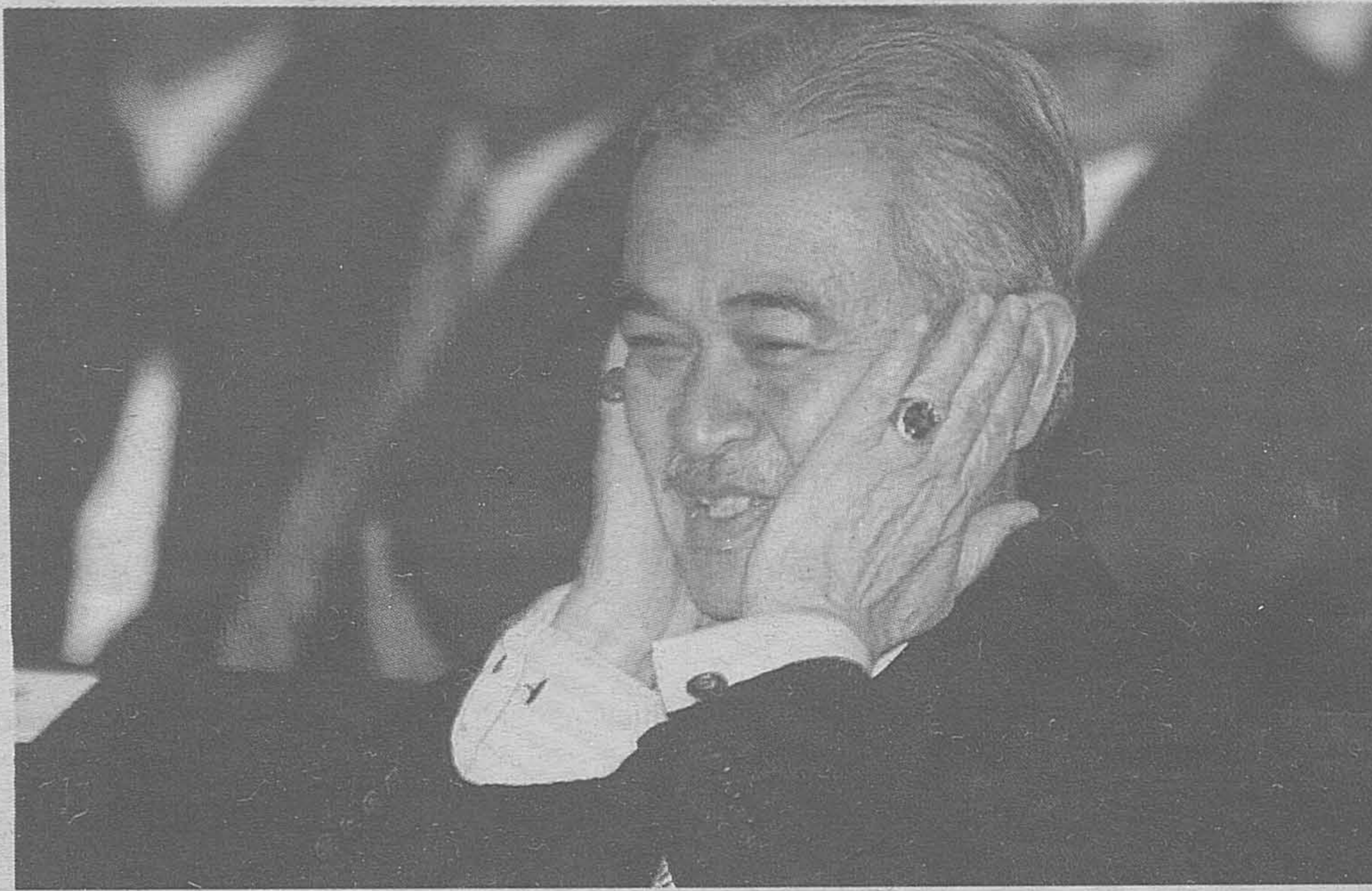
To a question whether his life would be more meaningful with Jeanne as his wife, he said: "How can it not be meaningful? That is God's will. A woman completes a man."

Asked to comment about his love for his late wife as compared to his future wife, he said: "My love for Endon will remain as strong as ever. Then, I fell for this one. I believe God has created in your heart many spaces for different people that you can love as much as you want."

"You can love your wife. You can love your mother. But you never compare. How can you compare your love for your mother and the love for your wife? God has created the capacity for us to love and to develop relations. That's important."

"Endon's pictures will remain where they are. I will never forget her. Those are lasting memories. It's all right if I want to add Jeanne to it," he quipped, as the journalists roared with laughter.

Asked why it took so long for him to announce the marriage and why he had brushed off the issue as rumours when asked by



Can't stop smiling: A happy Abdullah at the launch of SMIDEX 2007 at KLCC yesterday.

reporters earlier, he said the speculated dates of his marriage were wrong which was why he said it was rumours.

"Anyway, it has to take some time. I have to consult my children and ask my siblings. Then, I have to find the time. I was also always busy running around here and there."

Abdullah said he was happy and grateful to Allah that his children and siblings had approved of his choice.

He said his daughter Nori's relationship with his future wife was good and his siblings had no problems with Jeanne.

"She (Nori) accepts it. Otherwise, it will not go on."

On why he chose Saturday for the *akad nikah*, he said: "Saturday is a holiday. It will be easy for people to come."

He said only close family members would attend the ceremony.

"It will be very simple. No need for too many gifts. It will be far simpler than my first marriage."

Asked where he would go for the honeymoon, he chuckled and said: "I haven't planned yet. I have to discuss with the person concerned."

On whether he would address Jeanne - whose name he pronounced the French way throughout the press conference - as "darling," he said: "Why are you asking this? One day you will hear it. Next time when you hear me calling her you will know."

Asked when she would make her public appearance, the prime minister said the people would see her when she accompanies him on his visits abroad and during his official assignments across the country.

On whether he would hold a *bersanding* ceremony, he said: "There won't be one. It's an old couple marrying."

He said he had yet to plan for a wedding reception for friends.

Abdullah said he had informed the Yang di-Pertuan Agong about his marriage yesterday morning and later announced it to the Cabinet ministers before issuing a

statement to the media.

"Let the people know. There is nothing to hide," he said, adding that he hoped that the public would pray for the harmony of his marriage.

"A happy Prime Minister can do a lot of good work. I'm not saying I've not been happy so far, but I'm happier with a companion now," he added cheekily.

Kuala Lumpur-born Jeanne had worked at several major hotels in the city, including KL Hilton and Pan Pacific Hotel.

She had served as a supervisor at the Deputy Prime Minister's official residence and also as manager of the Seri Perdana complex.

She has two daughters from her previous marriage - Nadiah and Nadene.

The Prime Minister lost his wife Endon on Oct 20, 2005 after a two-year battle with breast cancer. The couple has two children, Datuk Kamaluddin and Nori.

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Congratulations pour in for Abdullah

»There won't be one (bersanding). It's an old couple marrying«

DATUK SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI