

# Pak Lah takes banter in his stride

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Like any groom-to-be, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has become a target of friendly banter wherever he now goes.

At the Internal Security Ministry yesterday, the normally officious excellence awards presentation took an informal and cheerful note when staff rushed to greet him with cries of *Selamat Pengantin Baru*.

There were handshakes, laughter and applause among the staff at the mere mention of the Prime Minister's name and his bride-to-be Jeanne Abdullah.

Even ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Yusoff was caught in the excitement, saying he had to ask Abdullah on the correct way to pronounce Jeanne's name.

(At the Wednesday press conference where he announced his impending marriage,

»I will bring my wife along for future ministry functions and you will all be able to meet her«

DATUK SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI

Abdullah used the French way of pronouncing the name, *zhahn*).

Abdul Aziz joked that it was a difficult name for Malaysians to say.

"Datuk Seri then told me that it is okay to pronounce it as Jean," he told reporters.

Abdul Aziz said he had received the circular from the Chief Secretary to the Government to inform all civil servants to address her as Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah, after the *akad nikah* (solemnisation of marriage) today.

He conveyed the well wishes of the ministry's staff to Abdullah, who is also Internal Security Minister, adding: "We wish him and his partner everlasting joy and happiness."

Abdul Aziz then dedicated a *pantun* to the Prime Minister and Jeanne: (see graphic on the right)

In his speech, the Prime Minister hoped that he and his future wife would live happily and harmoniously, and thanked the ministry's staff as well as the public, for their well wishes.

"I will bring my wife along for future ministry functions and you will all be able to meet her," he said, to resounding applause.