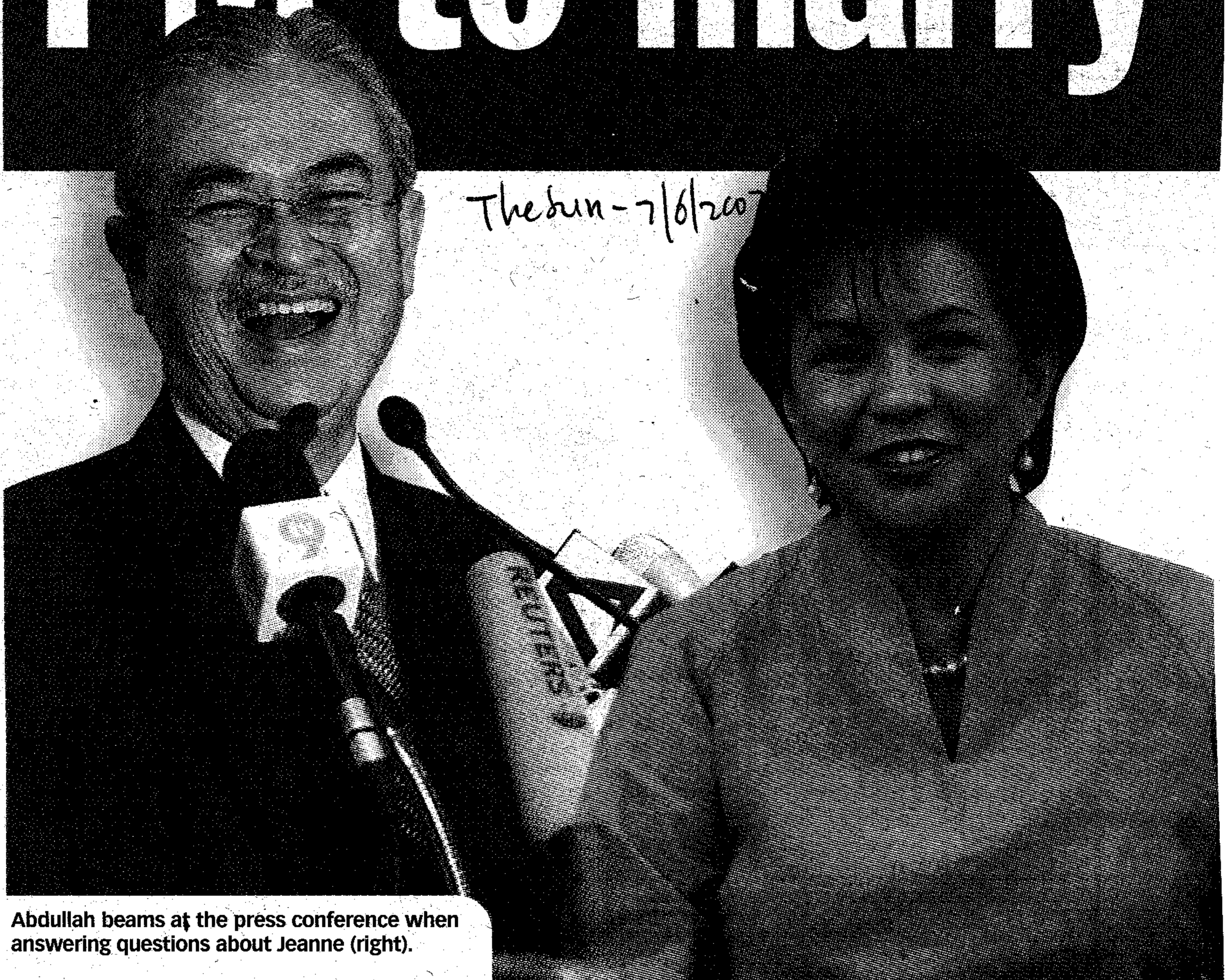


# PM to marry



Abdullah beams at the press conference when answering questions about Jeanne (right).

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was beaming yesterday when announcing that he has found a companion in Jeanne Abdullah, 53. The couple will marry on Saturday in a private ceremony at Seri Perdana in Putrajaya.

Grinning broadly, he fielded questions from relentless reporters, who did not only ask about the *akad nikah* (solemnisation ceremony) but also ventured into personal questions on how the relationship developed. Abdullah answered each query with a smile.

Abdullah, 67, said he was grateful to God as his choice of a new companion, after his wife of 40 years Datin Seri Endon Mahmood died in October 2005 after a long battle with breast cancer, had been accepted by his children and siblings.

He said Jeanne, who worked with Endon in running the official residence, was loved by Endon and was also a family member as she was married to Endon's younger brother (they divorced more than 15 years ago).

"She can take care of me, she can be my companion. That is important," he told a packed press conference after launching SMIDEX 2007 yesterday.

"She is a very moderate person. Friendly. And, looking at how she treated my guests when Endon was around, she was the one who usually welcomed those who came to see me for meetings, or foreign visitors, businessmen and government officials.

"She was the one who would greet them, entertain them. When we had parties, Jeanne was the one who managed them, looked for the caterers, determined the menu and arranged the tables and chairs.

» Turn to Page 2

# Jeanne worked in hospitality industry

## » From Front Page

"She did those things very well without any problem. That is a good character. She can easily mix with people also," he said.

A statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said Jeanne, born in Kuala Lumpur on July 29, 1953, is the eldest of four siblings. She studied at SM Assunta and had wide experience in the administration and hotel industry, having worked in Hilton Kuala Lumpur and Pan Pacific.

Jeanne had also worked as the organiser of the deputy prime minister's official residence and manager of the Seri Perdana Complex. She has two children from her previous marriage - Nadiah and Nadene.

Abdullah had dismissed rumours that he was getting married when reporters asked him several months ago. Yesterday, a reporter cheekily asked why he took so long to confirm the rumours. He said this was because the speculated dates of the wedding were inaccurate.

"I have to take some time to consult my children and siblings. Then, I have to find the right time, when I am not busy," he said, adding that he had informed the King and cabinet yesterday before issuing a statement.

Abdullah said he had known Jeanne for more than 20 years but it was only recently, less than a year ago, that the relationship turned into love.

**When did he propose?** "I wish I can remember." But, Abdullah said he did not propose on bended knee, as suggested by a reporter.

**The honeymoon:** Abdullah said this had yet to be discussed but it will not be immediately after the wedding as he would be going on official visits

overseas.

Asked whether there will be a reception for the people to meet Jeanne, he also said this had yet to be decided, but added that they could meet her during official functions later.

**Wedding ring:** Yes, it has been chosen but there would not be a *bersanding* ceremony or exchange of wedding gifts since this was a marriage between two elderly people.

The *akad nikah* will be a family affair and invitations are limited to close family members - the couple's children, siblings and in-laws.

**New woman in his life:** Abdullah said his love for Endon remained strong. He said pictures of Endon in the house would remain as they were "part of an everlasting memory" but Jeanne could add her own collection if she wished.

"I believe God has created in your heart space for different people that you can love as much as you want. You can love your mother, wife, daughter at the same time, but you never compare between them.

"God has created within you the capacity to love and develop relationships," he said.

He said he hoped the people will pray for their happiness. "A happier prime minister can do a lot of good work," he said.

Abdullah's son-in-law, Khairy Jamaluddin, said he was very happy with the news and that the marriage was an event that would bring lots of meaning to the family.

"I, my wife, Nori, my brother-in-law and his wife are happy with the news. We fully support his (prime minister's) decision for the marriage. We have known auntie Jeanne for a long time and we are very close.