

Abdullah brings smiles to ailing Pandithan

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk M.G. Pandithan, 66, changed his hospital gown for a *kurta* and put away his oxygen mask.

He got ready for an important visitor at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital ward yesterday afternoon. The visitor was none other than Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Abdullah greeted the Indian

Progressive Front president with: "How are you, Datuk? OK?"

A cheerful Pandithan sat up in bed.

"Look at that smile," Abdullah pointed out to the crowd of relatives and friends in the room.

He spent about 20 minutes alone speaking to Pandithan and his wife Datin B. Jayashree.

"He looks well. It is hard to recover from cancer but he has the determination to fight," he told reporters.

Pandithan, who was moved by Abdullah's visit, said: "I'm honoured."

He said although he did not hold any position in the government and was "a nobody", Abdullah still came to see him.

He said the people loved Abdullah because of his simplicity and this would lead him to greater heights.

"People can say anything about the Prime Minister but the rakyat will make sure that he obtains

greater results in the election," he said.

He said he would speak at the IPF annual conference.

"I feel I am getting better," he said.

He was admitted to the hospital in June and discharged two months later. He was readmitted at the beginning of last month.

He was given permission to return home for Deepavali but had breathing difficulties on Sunday and was rushed to the hospital.