

**PM: No guarantee petrol prices won't go up further**  
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To alleviate consumers' woes amid the spiralling oil prices, the Anti-Inflation Council announced several measures aimed at softening the effects of the last Wednesday's petrol hike.

MCPX

abdullah ahamad badawi pm anti inflation pc 090608 01After chairing the first meeting at Putrajaya today, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the council has decided that rebates to private vehicle owners via the post office will be expedited.

The government had initially set the rebate date for those who have already paid their road taxes in April and May as July 1.

"But looking at the situation, those who have paid their road taxes in April and May can begin claiming their rebates from June 14," said the prime minister.

After announcing the hefty fuel price hike last Wednesday, Abdullah had also revealed a cash rebate for Malaysian owners of private cars and motorcycles to ease the burden of the rise in the fuel prices.

A cash rebate of RM625 per year will be given to owners of private cars of engine capacity of up to 2,000 cc and pick-up trucks and jeeps of up to 2,500 cc.

And owners of private motorcycles of engine capacity of up to 250 cc will be paid a cash rebate of RM150 per year.

The cash rebate would be given to the owners of the cars and motorcycles when they pay or renew their road tax.

**Flat rate for transportation operators**

During the 30-minute press briefing, he also said that public transportation operators with fleetcards can continue to purchase diesel at RM1.43 per litre.

"To ensure that fares (for public transportation) do not go up, diesel quotas for transport operators will be increased," said Abdullah.

Besides public transport operators, taxis (which use petrol) and company buses will also be included in the fleetcard system.

However, he did not disclose the new quotas for the purchase of diesel.

Apart from the two measures highlighted, Abdullah also announced cost-cutting measures for the government and its agencies.

Besides cutting back on ministers' perks the government will also freeze on new intakes (non essential positions), stop unnecessary renovation work, halt asset acquisition (cars,

computers, furniture etc) and limit budgets for government functions.

After today's five-hour meeting, three other committees were formed.

The committees will look into more efficient usage of energy resources, improve bus services in the country and a media section (to be headed by Information Minister Ahmad Shabery Cheek and assisted by Bernama chief Anwar Zaini) to disseminate the council's decisions.

### **More fuel increase likely**

Despite the measures announced today, the worst is not over yet, according to the prime minister.

When asked to comment on Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Shahrir Samad's assurance that "prices will stay until March", Abdullah shook his head.

"We are still analysing this as the rise in world prices of oil is too quick (over the last few days)," said Abdullah.

Oil prices posted its biggest single-day hike last Friday when it rose nearly US\$11 hitting a new record of US\$138 a barrel in New York.

"When we did our assessment, the price of petrol was RM3. It is RM3.45 now.

"When it was RM3, we gave a 30-sen subsidy. But that has been wiped out now with a 45-sen increase. So there are many issues we have to consider.

"As such, I won't give any undertaking not to increase petrol prices," said Abdullah.

### **More measure coming**

As for the measures introduced today, he said that it is not the last.

"Although, some of the announcements today were already planned for earlier, we decided to release them one at a time. This is so that there won't be any confusion," he added.

The government is aware of the sentiments after last Wednesday's sudden increase, said Abdullah, and more measures are in the pipeline to help alleviate the situation.

Last Wednesday petrol and diesel prices went up by 78 sen and RM1 per litre respectively, the highest increase in these fuel prices ever.

The new price for petrol at the pump stood at RM2.70 per litre and diesel, RM2.58 per litre.