

Fuel price dominates meeting of BN MPs

NST - 14/3/2006

■ **By Wan Hamidi Hamid**
news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The 30 sen fuel price increase dominated the Barisan Nasional Members of Parliament closed-door meeting after the opening of Parliament today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who explained the agenda for this sitting, was peppered with questions on the impact of the fuel price increase during the question session.

Among the main concerns expressed by some MPs were the difficulties of explaining to grassroots worried by the impact of the price increase.

A few MPs also voiced strong concern over the issue, but many praised Abdullah's cool and calm demeanour during the one-and-a-half-hour session.

Speaking after the meeting, Abdullah said he did not think the MPs were having difficulties but were expressing concerns of the people.

He said he gave them the opportunity to express their concerns and those of their constituents.

"BN MPs understood the feelings of the people. "They asked the Government to look into the matter and I explained to them, we will take appropriate actions to address the matter," he said.

He also said MPs were free to bring up the fuel price hike issue

from tomorrow during the debate on the Royal Address, as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong had mentioned it in his speech this morning.

The Prime Minister said he was satisfied with the commendable spirit of BN MPs who were being positive over the issue, stating that they were not merely lamenting the matter but making specific suggestions to improve the situation.

During the meeting, some MPs proposed that the Government expand the fleet card facility to cover more sectors, while others provided ideas on improving public transportation.

There was even an idea to utilise the RM4.4 billion saved from the fuel subsidy reduction to embark

on projects to encourage the use of natural-gas vehicles.

Abdullah assured the MPs the Government would take all their suggestions into consideration.

He also said the Government would take immediate steps to curb a possible rise in inflation rate.

He said prices of controlled items would be strictly maintained and so far there had been no price hike on essential goods and household food ingredients.

Abdullah said the Dewan Rakyat would be extended for four days to allow the debate on the Water Services Industry Bill and National Water Services Commission Bill, and the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC).