

# PM: Tough decisions won't swing votes

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**PUTRAJAYA:** The Prime Minister is confident the tough decisions the government had to make last year will not swing votes away from Umno in the coming Batu Talam by-election.

*"Insya-Allah, we will win. We raised toll rates for reasons which have been explained. The government doesn't do things without good reason.*

*"Those who think about it carefully will accept the validity (of higher toll rates and fuel prices). But for those who don't like the government, nothing we do is right," Datuk Seri Abdullah Ah-*

mad Badawi said yesterday.

He was asked if the toll hike for five highways in the Klang Valley from Jan 1 and the raising of petrol and diesel prices twice last year would affect voter sentiments in Batu Talam.

Nomination day for the Pahang state seat by-election is on Jan 16, while polling day follows 12 days later in the event of a contest.

*"We are a responsible government and we are not out to be popular. Some decisions may not be easy on the people but we do not look for popularity. We don't raise tolls to get money."*

Abdullah, who announced a special loan scheme for businesses affected by the recent floods, said there was no intention of revoking the toll hike despite protests.

Abdullah declined to answer questions on the competing bids by Naza Group and DRB-HICOM for a stake in Proton.

*"I don't want to complicate things for the people involved in the discussions. Whatever decision is made must be in the best interests of Proton," he said.*

Earlier, at the monthly gathering of the Prime Minister's Depart-

ment, he said all civil servants should dispel the public's perception that the government's delivery system was weak, inefficient and corrupt.

*"If policies are understood, but there is not enough effort to speed up implementation, I fear that there will be a perception that there is corruption.*

*"If there is a perception that our weakness and slowness is due to corruption, it will be very difficult for the government.*

*"It is our collective responsibility to change this negative perception."*

