

# Voters smarter and more mature, says PM

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■ **By Deborah Loh**  
*news@nst.com.my*

**PUTRAJAYA:** Barisan Nasional's win in the Batu Talam by-election showed that the opposition's call for a boycott had failed.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the voters "knew better", judging from the 5,857 win margin, which more than doubled the majority obtained in the last general election.

"It is proof that the people were willing to vote despite the opposi-

tion and their supporters calling for a boycott.

"The voters are smarter, more mature. They understand better what elections are," the prime minister said on his return from London yesterday after attending the World Economic Forum in Switzerland.

He was greeted by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and other leaders.

Also present to greet him was the newly elected Batu Talam state assemblyman Abdul Aziz

Mat Kiram.

Abdullah, who was in Davos when Batu Talam went to the polls on Sunday, expressed happiness at the resounding victory.

Abdul Aziz garnered 6,267 votes to beat independent candidate Ng Chee Pang, who received 419 votes and lost his deposit. There were 384 spoilt votes.

"The margin is larger than we expected. The practice of democracy is alive and working, as proven through the ballot box."

On the opposition's boycott of

the polls, he said it was because they were "not brave enough to field a candidate".

Abdullah denied a Reuters report that the government had bought a RM175 million luxury jet for VVIP use.

He said the plane, for the use of the government and Yang di-Per-tuan Agong, was being leased from Penerbangan Malaysia Bhd, the parent company of Malaysia Airlines.

"We did not buy it. The plane belongs to PMB."