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Civil servants opening stalls must get green light

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Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi briefing Barisan Nasional members of parliament at Angkasapuri yesterday. Among them was Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak (third from left). — Bernama picture.

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KUALA LUMPUR: The government has announced more measures to fight inflation, including liberalising the issuance of small business permits and improving incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises.

As part of the restructuring of subsidies, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said about 500 petrol stations near the borders would have separate pumps for Malaysians and foreigners.

He said low-income earners could apply for short or long-term permits to conduct small businesses at locations such as *pasar tani* and housing estates.

"Civil servants are also allowed to apply for such permits once they get the green light from their department heads," he said after a special briefing for Barisan Nasional members of parliament at

Angkasapuri yesterday. However, Abdullah stressed that a second job should not impair the civil servants' quality of work.

Present at the briefing were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad and Information Minister Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek.

For small and medium-sized industries, he said, several measures had been drawn up, including tax incentives which are being fine-tuned by the Treasury.

On separate pumps for foreigners at border petrol stations, Najib said the two-tier pricing would be fairer and save the government money.

"The system will allow us to sell fuel at the actual market price to foreigners and subsidised price to Malaysians. This means that owners of vehicles with foreign number plates will get their petrol without discount or subsidy and

Malaysians can then know the actual market price," he said.

Shahrir later said petrol stations located between 30km and 50km from the borders would implement the two-pump system.

"It will involve about 500 petrol stations near the borders.

"The oil companies have agreed to the proposal of having the two-pump system and they will enforce it at their petrol stations."

The system, he said, would be implemented once the new commissions for station operators were decided.

Shahrir said the government had asked petrol pump operators to open from 6am to 11pm.

They were discouraged from operating 24 hours a day. This would reduce electricity consumption as well as operating expenditure, he said.

Those who wanted to open round-the-clock must get permission from the ministry.

Abdullah also announced that

owners of vehicles with engine capacities above 3000cc in Sabah and Sarawak were eligible for the RM625 rebate.

"This is because these vehicles have become a necessity for those in the remote areas of the two states," he said.

At the same time, he said the government was exploring ways to improve energy efficiency, including the use of solar or wind power, and biofuels.

"We are also looking at the viability of using nuclear power. This needs close study because of various reasons, including the difficulty of disposing nuclear waste."

Abdullah said efforts were being made to increase the production and quality of commodities such as palm oil without expanding the existing acreage.

"The government will not run away from its responsibility since high prices of fuel, food and goods have become a big issue for the people and the country," he said.