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Abdullah: Fuel price cut not politically motivated

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KUALA LUMPUR: "Never mind what people say. If I want to change the policy because I think I have to, I will change it."

With those words, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi rejected charges of backtracking over his decision to reduce petrol and diesel prices a week ahead of the scheduled date.

"I know there are people who call me a flip-flop. I do not care", Abdullah said. "I have work to do. I will do it my way."

The retail petrol price was reduced to RM2.55 per litre and diesel to RM2.50 per litre yesterday.

The government announced on Aug 1 that pump prices would be adjusted according to world crude oil prices on the first day of each month, starting Sept 1.

Abdullah also reiterated that the decision to reduce fuel prices a week earlier than the scheduled implementation of the new price

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Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi
prime minister



mechanism was for the benefit of all Malaysians. It was not politically motivated.

"I wouldn't have minded waiting if the global crude oil price continued its downward trend," he said after launching the National Crime Prevention Month 2008 here yesterday.

"I have said this before: if the trend goes up, then there would

have been no reduction in the price of petrol. And I have been promising that this (reduction) is possible."

He said the rakyat would have been unhappy if fuel prices had not come down, as promised.

"Wherever I went, everybody was asking the same question: when Pak Lah?"

"One month is too long, Pak

Lah, they said. So I said, never mind, we do it."

On whether the move had anything to do with gaining popularity in the current political situation, Abdullah dismissed the question: "I never seek popularity, my dear," he said in jest to the reporter.

Asked to comment on the hope that the price of goods would also fall, Abdullah said the government had urged traders to move quickly.

"Traders need to pass on the benefits (of lower fuel prices) to consumers.

"Please hurry up and reduce the prices. Help one another."

The prime minister also dismissed the notion that the upcoming "people-friendly" budget was designed to shore up support for the Barisan Nasional.

"If I have to do something for the people, if I can afford it, if there is money available for it, then I will do it," he said.

"I don't care what the opposition says. I will do it. That's me. You know me better."