

# Padi estates for better yield

## PM: Pull farmers out of poverty by working land as large-scale plantations

**ALOR SETAR:** Padi farmers can rise out of poverty if they are prepared to accept the idea of consolidating their smallholdings and operating them as estates, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said they should learn from the success of the amalgamation of rubber as well as oil palm smallholdings and work their land as large-scale plantations with the help of agricultural expertise and skills.

“With the new approach proposed by the Government, we believe skilled and trained manpower can contribute to the padi industry and eliminate poverty,” he said when opening the National Padi Convention here on Monday.

He also said the approach would also involve the use of modern machinery as well as maximising land use by allocating some areas for vegetable farming and animal husbandry.

“If this method is accepted, I am sure padi farmers will no longer remain in poverty. Today, we import foodstuff to the tune of RM60bil. With modern techniques, we do not need vast tracts of land ... the yield will be bigger and it can replace the imported vegetables,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said the new direc-



**All smiles:** Dr Mahathir flanked by Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir (left) and Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Salahuddin Ayub at the opening of the National Padi Convention in Alor Setar. — Bernama

tion of the national padi industry was not only mooted to solve the problem of poverty among padi farmers but also to ensure that this group will continue to supply the staple food and save people from food scarcity.

He said the farmers must have the knowledge to increase their income to break free from the

shackles of poverty and regard the effort as a religious obligation that has to be fulfilled.

“Cultivating padi, supplying food and saving us from the danger of food shortage is also a form of worship. For Muslims, this is a religious devotion that we have to give priority to,” he said.

Dr Mahathir advised farmers

against depending too much on government subsidies and to focus on improving their living conditions.

“We can blame others for our poverty but they will not strive to change our fate. Instead, we have the control over ourselves and can change our ways from bad to good,” he said. — Bernama