

Padi subsidy increased for first time since the 90s

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PARIT BUNTAR: From today, rice farmers in the country can heave a sigh of relief with a RM140 increase in the rate of the Padi Price Subsidy Scheme, the first since the 1990s.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who made the announcement yesterday, said the last increase for the scheme was when he was the finance minister in the 1990s.

"Now that I am once again the Finance Minister, I am going to announce that the subsidy rate is being raised from the current RM360 per metric tonne to RM500 per metric tonne, the highest increase to date," he said at the launch of the state-level Sentuhan Agro Madani event at Dataran Kerian Permai here.

The increase will take effect today.



Man of the hour: Anwar greeting bersama farmers during the state-level Sentuhan Agro Madani at Dataran Kerian Permai. – Bernama

Also present at the function were Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu, his deputy Chan Foong Hin and Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad.

Anwar said that with this move,

farmers will receive at least RM1,700 per metric tonne, and this will raise their income as well as motivate them to increase production.

"The increase in the subsidy rate involves an additional financial

implication of around RM360mil per year, with the total allocation reaching RM1bil per year.

"The rice grading mechanism will also be reviewed. Agricultural officers will be trained and stationed at factories to make sure that the rice quality is not compromised," he added.

Anwar also questioned his critics why they had failed to increase the rate when they were in power.

"I don't care what anyone says. For me, the priority is to boost the country's economy and ensure that the well-being of the people is taken care of.

"I wish to bring in investors," he said, adding that "some big names" were already in the country.

Later, Mohamad told reporters that rice farmers had been waiting for this news for a very long time now.

He said while not all will be satisfied, the announcement is definitely a big relief for many.

Earlier, Anwar said he would make sure that those leaders who stole the wealth of the country would pay the price.

He said while he could ignore those who had humiliated him daily, he would never forgive former leaders who stole money belonging to the people, adding that they would be arrested and prosecuted.

Anwar also said he is not bothered by those condemning him and making slanderous statements about him daily.

"I have no time to answer them. I have even forgiven those who ill-treated me during my stay in prison.

"I was whacked (and) arrested while nearly half-dead. I don't want to prolong that story.

"Now that I am in power, I can "korek" (dig) back everything and all the misappropriation of funds but I have a lot of other things to do," he said.