

RM3B BOOST FOR KEDAH PADI FARMERS

Anwar says this is to increase their income while achieving national food security

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday pledged to allocate RM3 billion to improve Kedah's padi yield to increase the farmers' income while achieving national food security.

He said he was committed to fulfilling farmers' wishes to upgrade the irrigation system and infrastructure in 201,000ha of padi fields under the Muda Agriculture Development Authority (Mada) in the next three to four years.

"Mada started a pilot project for five planting seasons every two years.

"Since the project has been successful, we need to start working on expanding it to cover all padi fields under Mada.

"I want to ensure that our padi farmers' livelihood is elevated by increasing their monthly income from RM1,200 to RM1,800 through the project.

"This will also resolve the national food security by increasing the padi yield, especially in Kedah.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his deputy, Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, arriving at the 'Sentuhan Madani' gathering in Alor Star yesterday. PIC BY SYAHARIM ABIDIN

"Of course, RM3 billion is a huge amount, but it is my duty to find the money."

He said this at the Sentuhan Madani gathering with farmers, breeders, fishermen, rubber smallholders and rubber tappers at the Mada headquarters here.

Present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu, Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil and Mada chairman Datuk Dr Ismail Salleh.

Anwar said Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary had voiced his commitment in ensuring that Padiberas Nasional Bhd (Bernas)

would help the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry and its agencies, namely the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Mardi) and Mada, in carrying out the project.

"It is asking for cooperation from padi farmers to give us the chance to introduce new farming methods to increase their yield.

"We hope to achieve the target in several programmes, including the Large Scale Smart Padi Farming (Smarty SBB)."

Kedah is the country's largest rice producer, with one million tonnes produced annually, accounting for about 40 per cent of the national rice production.