

Rice hoarders to face stern action: PM

BENTONG: Legal action will be taken against those found hoarding rice in the country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said he has given instructions to the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry and its minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu to ensure that the ministry's enforcement agencies monitor the matter and take action against offenders.

"People are indeed complaining about rice (supply and cost), even in Indonesia. President Jokowi

(Joko Widodo) said the price of rice has risen because 18 countries that supply rice have either blocked, stopped or reduced their rice exports, causing a demand and supply issue.

"Then, there are those who hoard or withhold rice. If anyone dares to do this at a time when it is difficult for people to get supplies of rice, you better watch out. We will find you and issue summonses and take you to court."

Anwar, who is also Pakatan Harapan chairman, was speaking at the *Madani Unity Mega ceramah*

held at Dataran Simpang Pelangai in conjunction with the Pelangai state seat by-election campaign on Monday.

Also present were Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and the BN candidate for the Pelangai seat, Datuk Amizar Abu Adam.

Earlier, Mohamad said Anwar had approved four additional interventions to be implemented to resolve the issue of rice supply in the country, including the launching of a Special Integrated Enforcement Task Force for

white rice.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said the government is constantly looking for avenues to resolve the issue of rice and needs some more time to do so.

"We try, but can the issue be solved 100%? No, the issue of rice is a serious one. Therefore, I said give us a week to monitor the situation. If it is not resolved, we will continue discussions before tabling Budget 2024 on Oct 13.

"That is why we are trying. For rice, we are going to increase the subsidy to the tune of RM400

million for a few months. The rice issue is not limited to the peninsular, but Sabah and Sarawak are also affected."

He was speaking at the *Segalanya Felda Carnival* at Dataran Niaga Felda Chemomoi on Monday.

Anwar added that the government has decided to channel the subsidy of RM400 million to premises like army camps, police and school hostels for the use of imported rice so that there would be more local white rice available in the market. - Bernama