

# Govt nod to convert Mada land for development

**JITRA:** The federal government has agreed in principle to proposals to convert agricultural land within the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (Mada) area for industrial and commercial development, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said further discussions with relevant parties would be held on this.

"We are considering proposals, for example, in certain areas originally under Mada where a portion of the land could be converted for housing, industry or business purposes.

"The federal government has

agreed in principle to this and I urge officials to expedite discussions to help boost Kedah's income," he said at the Kedah-level *Madani Aidilfitri* celebration here on Saturday.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor and several Cabinet ministers also attended the event.

Anwar said the federal government has also agreed to increase allocations to upgrade irrigation systems in the Mada area to facilitate the five seasons in two years padi cultivation initiative.

He said allocations for this, previously at RM3 billion, have been increased to RM5 billion.

Anwar also emphasised the need to assist 2,500 hardcore poor families in Kedah within two months as part of efforts to eradicate hardcore poverty in the state.

He said this required cooperation between the federal and state governments, and directed the Implementation Coordination Unit to oversee this effort.

"I believe, *Insha-Allah*, this cooperation will yield positive results because we do not want these states,

which happen to be Malay and Muslim majority, to be in difficulty."

Anwar said Kedah is one of the states receiving significant allocations from the federal government due to its role and special status in rice production and its contribution to the nation's food security.

"However, there is an issue raised by the state government regarding the burden faced by padi farmers within the impoverished community who need assistance.

"Since last year, the federal government has increased the padi price subsidy scheme from RM350 per

tonne to RM500 per tonne."

Anwar also said there is significant investor interest in the Kulim Hi Tech Park, and highlighted the need for the country to supply skilled resources through Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

"This is the situation, so I feel that we, both the federal and state governments, should focus on this.

"On May 10, I will launch the first AI faculty in Malaysia. I want our youths to have expertise and skills, and will align it with universities across Malaysia so that we do not lag behind in the field of AI."- Bernama