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### IRRIGATION PROJECTS

# PM: SPEED UP KEDAH PADI PLAN

PM wants ministry, Kedah govt to work together to boost padi production

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**P**RIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim urged the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry and the Kedah government to collaborate in expediting the implementation of the two-year, five-season padi cultivation programme.

This initiative will be carried out in areas under the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (Mada).

He said the effort included accelerating land acquisition to upgrade irrigation and providing progress reports to the ministry.

"Agencies must submit reports fast. We need to accelerate the process and cannot be complacent. Delays will burden farmers.

"This expenditure must be fast-tracked to ensure more reliable irrigation for padi fields.

"We have drawn up a long-term plan with an estimated budget of RM1 billion for the first phase of this project.

"That's why farmers should not be upset. For me, this is not about political differences. I want to assure them that the government can take action to support them."

Anwar was speaking at the launch of Phase 1 of the infrastructure project to support the five-season padi planting programme in the Muda region in Kampung Pida 4, Ayer Hitam.

Present were Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu and Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor.

The project includes the rehabilitation of the Pedu Dam and the construction of 15 blocks of tertiary irrigation systems for Mada padi fields. It covers nearly 11,000ha of padi and will benefit 6,172 farmers.

The project cost includes six years of maintenance for the tertiary irrigation systems and sev-

en years for the Pedu Dam.

Anwar said Phase 1 was part of the RM5 billion his administration pledged to boost padi production in Kedah.

He said the government was committed to solving issues farmers raised, such as padi floor price and challenges faced by millers, but the problem would persist if productivity remained stagnant.

"I have engaged in discussions with farmers, state government officials and the agriculture minister to find a solution.

"One of the proposals is to develop irrigation infrastructure, including upgrading canal systems and dams, such as the Pedu Dam, which plays a crucial role.

"The cost of developing irrigation systems is high and requires significant funding, but we have to carry out the project.

"For example, in the 1990s, we had agricultural machinery that were outdated and rusty. We had to seek expertise from the Netherlands, one of the world's most skilled nations in drainage and flood mitigation systems."

He hoped the project would reduce the waiting period for water

supply from 40 days to 10.

He said it was important to view the agricultural sector as not just an economic issue, but also a matter of national food security.

"We must work together to ensure the success of this plan for the future of our farmers and the country."

Anwar told the ministry to address farmers' complaints on the poor quality of government-subsidised accredited padi seeds.

"We will work to resolve all issues raised by farmers. I acknowledge that many have expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the padi seeds.

"I want Mat Sabu to look into this. I want farmers to receive paid seeds that meet their quality expectations.

"So, discuss this issue with farmers and address this issue properly."

He announced that half of the RM30 million cash aid from Padiberas Nasional Bhd would be disbursed to padi farmers soon.

He said the RM15 million cash aid aimed to ease farmers' burden in preparing for Ramadan and Hari Raya Aidilfitri.