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Community colleges in six settlements by year-end

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THE Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) will set-up community colleges in six Felda land scheme settlements this year, as part of the agency's plans to provide quality education to children of Felda settlers.

Director-general Khamis Md Som said the six colleges would be in Laka (Kedah), Mempaga (Pahang), Kerteh (Terengganu), Pasak (Johor), Bandar Cenderawasih (Sabah) and Gugusan Raja Alias (Negri Sembilan).

"We have obtained approval from the relevant authorities to start construction and are in the process of negotiating with a few higher learning institutions on the operations of the colleges and courses to be offered," he said.

Another college which Felda plans to establish this year is Kolej Integrasi Ilmu, a preparatory centre for Felda students before going to university.

Among subjects to be taught here include ethics, moral studies, English and Islamic-related subjects.

"We want to ensure that students from Felda settlements are well prepared and not easily influenced by immoral activities," he added.

Meanwhile, the agency established an English Language Centre in Kelana Jaya earlier this year to improve Felda students' command of the language.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed had earlier this year urged Malaysians to master English.

He had also said that Malaysians needed to acquire English and could not survive with just Bahasa Malaysia.

Steps have been taken to teach Science and Mathematics in English in schools.

Higher learning institutions have also been urged to emphasise more on the usage of English language for all subjects.

Meanwhile, the English Language Centre, located at Asrama Semai Bakti Felda, started off with 50 students in February.

The 50 students graduated in May after undergoing 14 weeks of intensive training in English. The second batch consists of 44 students and they are expected to graduate next month.

Centre co-ordinator Subramaniam Nathan said the course was offered not only to settlers' children but also students of seven Felda adopted schools in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

The minimum requirement is credit in English at Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia level. The course is fully sponsored by Felda.

He said the response was overwhelming and that the centre planned to have four intakes next year. It has two intakes now.

"We plan to start the intake early, as early as December," he said, adding that the centre also planned to double the number of students for each intake. He said the centre guaranteed that students would be able to write and converse in English upon completing the 14-week intensive course.

"In fact, within two to three weeks after enrolling in the course, they will see an improvement of between 60 and 65 per cent," he said.

On the centre's achievement in improving students' command of English within a short period, he said he made it a must for everyone to communicate in English at the centre. "Those found communicating in Bahasa Malaysia, especially students, will be fined," he added.

"We want them to be more confident when communicating with people in

English. Some of these students have a good command in English but lack confidence," he said.