

Don't feel disheartened over reports, PM tells Felda settlers
Malaysiakini.com
July 09, 2010

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today urged the Felda settlers not to feel disheartened by the inaccurate media report regarding the financial health of the land development authority.

"I find this deliberate misreporting an affront to these hardworking Malaysians and a blatant attempt to discredit the Government's efforts to improve our quality of life.

"They tarnish not only the reputation of Felda, but also of all the hard-working individuals who are part of this institution," he said in his blog www.1malaysia.com.my.

Najib (right), who described Felda as "one that I hold dear for what it represents in this country's history and for what it has meant to generations of Malaysians whose sweat, blood and tears have transformed it into what it is today", expressed his frustration that until today, "no apology has been forthcoming to redress this insult."

"And Felda is within its rights to take legal measures to protect the integrity of the organisation," he said.

Najib was commenting on the front-page article in Suara Keadilan, the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) official organ, titled 'Felda Bangkrap' in its June 22-29 issue.

The prime minister said to date, Felda had RM1.3 billion in cash reserves and RM4 billion in shares of various public listed companies, acquired with an initial investment of only RM844 million.

The commercial plantations owned by Felda are estimated to be worth at least RM10 billion, and a sum of RM2.4 billion was spent on replanting to improve Felda's palm oil and rubber yield.

He said last year alone, Felda paid RM26 million in tithes (zakat).

"In a state of bankruptcy, an organisation would not be required to pay zakat, only further disproving the accusations," he said.

FeldaNajib also said in order to grow as an organisation, Felda must be prepared to explore and embark on new business and development frontiers.

"This is why a memorandum of understanding was signed to build a strategic partnership for Felda to become Malaysia's largest beef and milk producer. A sum of RM603 million has been set aside by Felda as interest-free loans on offer to its settlers.

"Felda is also committed to improving education opportunities, evident from the newly-opened MRSM Felda Trolak, which was wholly funded by Felda," he added.

Najib said these investments and expenditure were made to benefit the settlers, and Malaysians in general, "but allegations regarding misappropriation of funds and lavish spending attempt to cast aspersions on these efforts and impede our work."

To the Felda settlers, the prime minister advised them to continue "to do great work for your family, your community, and your country".

"We will continue to find ways to improve the standard of living in your communities and to ensure your efforts will be duly rewarded," he added.

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