

Felda, AirAsia in pact to train youths as pilots

NST: 7/7/2007

■ By Deborah Loh
news@nst.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: Felda youths will take to the skies under an agreement with AirAsia to train them to become pilots.

Felda will sponsor each youth at a cost of RM180,000 for one-and-a-half years of training, and the airline has agreed to provide guaranteed employment to those who make the cut.

The first batch of five youths have been identified as possible trainees and will be interviewed for admission into the next session of AirAsia's pilot training programme, to begin next year, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced yesterday.

He said the candidates were all Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) holders and would be required to pass several tests to ensure they met the requirements.

"We will increase the number of candidates in future batches.

"The investment to train each person is high but they will stand a chance of becoming pilots and will have guaranteed employment by AirAsia if they graduate successfully," Najib told a press conference after launching Felda's Golden Jubilee celebrations at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre here.

Another 75 will be trained under Syarikat Penerbangan Awam to become aircraft maintenance engineers, at a cost of RM125,000 each.

Both training programmes come under Felda's allocation to provide skills training to settlers, especially unemployed youths who are still living in the land schemes.



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak launching Felda's Golden Jubilee celebrations at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre yesterday.

An allocation of RM25 million was spent on skills training in 2004. The amount has been doubled to RM50 million since 2005.

To date, 8,660 people have completed their training in various industries and hold qualifications at the certificate and diploma level.

"Felda youths must not be satisfied with passing their SPM and limit their ambitions to running small shops by the roadside, or becoming mechanics and remain within their settlements. They should have bigger dreams," Najib said in his speech when opening the event.

"Our programmes for Felda youths will be aimed at building professional skills. The first generation of settlers opened up land, the subsequent generations should open their minds."

Najib also announced other

goodies for the 317 settlements nationwide:

- RM1.68 million a month to be distributed in the settlements to improve and beautify their surroundings and public amenities. The idea is to turn settlements into "garden communities";

- A RM10,000 grant for each settler home that is old and in poor condition. Najib said there were 3,662 houses in this condition and the total cost to renovate them would be RM36.6 million;

- A maximum loan of RM40,000 for settlers who want to enlarge their houses. The loan is interest-free for 15 years and there have been 5,907 applications; and

- New street lighting in 50 settlements costing RM10.5 million, to be completed by the end of this year.

Najib said Felda was still considering this year's bonus payout and *duit raya* allocation.