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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak witnessing the exchanging of documents between ECERDC CEO Datuk Jebasingam Issace John (front, left) and Felda general manager Datuk Faizoull Ahmad in Putrajaya yesterday. Also present were (from left) Kelantan Menteri Besar Ahmad Yakob, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob (partly hidden), Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Walid Omar. Pic by Fariz Iswadi Ismail

# Prized catch for Felda settlers

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**STURGEON FARMING:** It can produce up to 30 tonnes of caviar a year with potential revenue of RM100m

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**T**HE East Coast Economic Region (ECER) now offers Felda settlers another industry — commercial sturgeon farming — as an additional economic means of developing the community.

A RM120 million sturgeon farm will soon take shape in Pahang, creating a huge economic impact for 1,300 Felda settlers and their families, who are mostly engaged in the oil palm industry.

The pricey caviar is produced from sturgeon farming.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Felda Investment Corporation and MMC Hased Co Ltd of South Korea at his office here yesterday.

The East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECERDC) and the Malaysian Biotechnology Corporation will act as Felda's strategic collaborative partners in this project.

According to ECERDC, Jerantut and Jengka are among the potential locations for the sturgeon farming project.

"With a market price of between US\$3,000 and US\$5,000 (RM9,550 and RM15,900) per kg, the project is expected to generate a monthly income of around RM10,000 for Felda settlers, with a payback period of seven years."

At full production capacity, the farm can produce up to 30 tonnes of caviar per year, with a potential revenue of nearly RM100 million.

Najib was quoted as saying in a statement that the sturgeon farm concept will be expanded to the surrounding Felda settlements to create a regional sturgeon aquafarm.

The farming complex will also house an exhibition area, aquariums and a research and development centre, which is poised to

be a tourism attraction in ECER.

Construction of the sturgeon farming complex will commence next year and is expected to be ready in 18 to 24 months.

ECERDC chief executive officer Datuk Jebasingam Issace John said commercial sturgeon farming will appeal to the second-generation Felda settlers and help them diversify instead of focusing only on the upstream and downstream business.

Najib also witnessed several strategic partnership deals between Felda, BiotechCorp and ECERDC for high-impact projects involving a total investment of nearly RM750 million.

The other projects are biomass development, oil palm-based downstream industries development and botanical drug industry development.

Felda was represented by its director-general Datuk Faizoull Ahmad while BiotechCorp was represented by chief executive officer Datuk Dr Mohd Nazlee Kamal.

Meanwhile, the growth corridor, which covers Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and Mersing district in Johor, has attracted RM49 billion worth of investments since it was launched five years ago, generating 40,000 jobs.