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PM: We'll transform agriculture

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MAHA FESTIVAL:

Govt to ensure country is self-sufficient in food by 2050

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THE Malaysia Agriculture, Horticulture and Agrotourism (MAHA) festival is a reflection of the government's commitment to develop the agriculture industry into a strategic sector, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Najib said the government, through the recently announced 2050 National Transformation (TN50) plan, would ensure food security in the country.

"It is projected that by 2050, there will be 50 million Malaysians. At present, we import RM18 billion worth of food every year and if we don't do something about it, this figure will increase.

"Therefore, by 2050, we need to ensure that we are self-sufficient in food," he said when opening the MAHA 2016 festival at Malaysia Agro Exposition Park Serdang here yesterday.

Najib said the government wanted to create a generation of experts in the agriculture industry by promoting the field to youth through events like MAHA.

"We want our children to get into farming and agriculture. We don't want this sector to be seen as unglamorous," he said, adding that future farmers should be utilising the latest multi-crop technologies, besides cultivating good farming practices.

"Children these days do not know what a rambutan tree looks like.



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** greeting visitors at the Malaysia Agriculture, Horticulture and Agrotourism festival in Serdang yesterday. With him is Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Minister **Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek** (left). Bernama pic

They only know the rambutan fruit sold in supermarkets. Many do not know what padi looks like, how it is planted and how it is harvested."

Present were Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek, his deputy, Datuk Seri Tajuddin Abdul Rahman, and Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim.

Najib said 700,000 people had visited MAHA since Thursday.

He said the government expected

three million visitors by the end of the two-week festival.

"MAHA is now a brand that is becoming very popular among the people. Its concept has gone through many evolutions since its first iteration."

MAHA 2016 ends on Dec 11.

With the theme "Our Food Our Future", the festival highlights the issue of food security and sovereignty, awareness about the enormity of the role played by the agriculture sector as the backbone of national development, as well as the impor-

ance of defending food sovereignty as the basis of the nation's power.

Apart from local entrepreneurs and traders, MAHA 2016 has also attracted companies from almost 20 countries, including Fiji, South Korea, South Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Ecuador, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Australia, Iran, Spain, Canada, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan and Tunisia.

Visitors will be treated to performances by local celebrities, such as Wali Band, Shila Amzah, and Akim and the Majistret.

They can buy fresh produce and unusual agro-products, handicraft and other items at the agro bazaar.

Visitors can also make their way to Laman Tiba 1 and Laman Tiba 2 to buy fruits or vegetables at special prices.

There are buses, trams, buggies and wagons to ferry visitors from the car park to 20 stops.

Other facilities include eight information counters, 23 suraus, more than 350 food stalls and 670 toilets.