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PM: Felcra can take the lead

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50TH ANNIVERSARY:

It can spearhead move to reduce dependence on food imports, says Najib

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GOVERNMENT-OWNED company Felcra Bhd should take the lead to reduce the country's dependence on food imports, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said here yesterday.

Last year, more than RM45 billion was spent on food imports and Felcra could venture into food production, especially in the supply of chicken, meat and crops, he said during the company's 50th anniversary celebrations.

Najib said Felcra could spearhead the task because it had the ability to become a major food producer, thus strengthening the country's food security.

To boost its capacity, Najib said Felcra would set aside an additional RM5 million on top of its RM6.3 million revolving fund to aid entrepreneurs in starting or developing their businesses.

"A total of 1,100 entrepreneurs have been assisted through the revolving fund, totalling RM12.5 million, in sectors such as food, livestock, aquaculture, construction, manufacturing and services."

Felcra Bhd also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) to reduce repayments by as much as 20 per cent for students studying in Felcra colleges.

"Felcra Bhd will allocate RM20 million for the span of 10 years (RM2 million per year) to benefit 500 students for a year," he said, adding through the collaboration,



Datuk Seri Najib Razak receiving a picture of him as a boy with his father, Tun Abdul Razak, and his family, at Felcra Bhd's 50th anniversary celebration at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With him are Rural and Regional Development Minister **Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob** (third from right) and Felcra Bhd chairman **Datuk Seri Bung Mokhtar Radin** (second from right). Pic by Yazit Razali

students studying in Felcra colleges would be guaranteed a PTPTN loan.

In addition to the MoU with PTPTN, two other MoUs, with Sime Darby Plantations Sdn Bhd and UniMAP Holdings Sdn Bhd, were signed.

Najib said that the collaboration with Sime Darby Plantations was to encourage and explore a synergic partnership in six main areas.

"The partnership will include providing agricultural input, such as seeds and seedlings, management, advisory and training for farms and factories, research laboratory services, farm development and plant engineering services," he said.

The collaboration with UniMAP Holdings is for the cultivation of harumanis mangoes via green-

house cultivation.

"This partnership was encouraged by the demand for harumanis mangoes. The partnership with UniMAP Holdings Sdn Bhd will not only be for technology transfers, but also as a marketing agent for this project," he said.

Najib said RM5 million would be allocated to build 13 greenhouses in Felcra Lubuk Sireh, Perlis.

Present at the celebration were Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri

Yaakob and Felcra Bhd chairman Datuk Seri Bung Mokhtar Radin.

Bung Mokhtar said since Felcra was corporatised in 1997, it has given out RM5.6 billion in dividends to Felcra settlers.

"This is a testament to Felcra's progressiveness.

"We are thankful that we are able to capture the vision by the late Tun Abdul Razak, when he established Felcra in 1966," he said, referring to the organisation once known as the Federal Land Con-

The five points emphasised by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at Felcra's 50th anniversary celebrations:

1. Felcra to set aside an additional RM5 million, on top of its RM6.3 million revolving fund, to aid entrepreneurs in starting or developing their businesses.
2. Felcra to spearhead food security and reduce the country's dependence on food imports.
3. Realise a synergic partnership between Felcra and Sime Darby Plantations. The areas to be focused on include the supply of seedlings, fertilisers, poisons (weed and insecticides) and the sale of microbes and farming tools; and activities related to farming, processing services and the sale and purchase of oil commodities and downstream products.
4. Felcra and UniMAP Holdings Sdn Bhd to cooperate to apply greenhouse technology in the production of harumanis mangoes.
5. Felcra to offer financial assistance in the form of a reduction in repayment of National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) loans to the children of settlers who are qualified to further their studies in Felcra colleges.

solidation and Rehabilitation Authority.

In celebration of Felcra's 50th year, Bank Negara Malaysia issued commemorative coins, which were launched by Najib at the same event yesterday.

The coins, silver-coloured commemorative coins and Nordic gold brilliant uncirculated commemorative coins, will be available for sale from today at Bank Negara Malaysia's Museum and Art Gallery and its regional offices.