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Najib presents awards to ECER entrepreneurs

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PUTRAJAYA: The East Coast Economic Region (ECER) has generated 133,000 jobs and groomed 14,240 entrepreneurs in urban and rural areas in Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and Mersing in Johor.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak met 15 of these “groomed” entrepreneurs as he presented them with the inaugural “empower ECER entrepreneur” awards yesterday.

The individuals had their lives turned around when the ECER Development Council (ECERDC) chose them to be part of its “empower ECER” skills and entrepreneurship training programme.

Khairul Azizi Ramli, 40, who manages multiple businesses with a monthly earning of RM60,000, secured the top award, the Usahawan Gemilang empower ECER award.

Wheelchair-bound Rozlina Ismail, 47, won the Usahawan empower ECER special award for the disabled category, and former mat rempit Muhammad Zulhanif Hazman, 22, received the Young Entrepreneur empower ECER award.

Rozlina said she was driven to work harder as a tailor when her husband died in 2011 so that she could provide for her three children, aged 18, 16 and 11, with her monthly earning of RM2,000.

Zulhanif said he was attracted to do business when he sold satay after Form Five.

“I began my business from scratch by learning to make satay from my mother.

“To make my satay stand out, the chicken satay comes in different colours, like red and green,” he said,



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak presenting the Usahawan empower ECER special award for the disabled category to **Rozlina Ismail** at the ‘empower ECER entrepreneur’ awards ceremony in Putrajaya yesterday.
Pic by Fariz Iswadi Ismail

adding that he could make about RM15,000 a month.

Earlier, Najib chaired ECERDC’s second council meeting this year.

Present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa, Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Mohamad Hanadzlah, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai.

ECERDC chief executive officer Datuk Seri Jebasingam Issace John said the programmes were just the tipping point to turn these winners around from humble beginnings to remarkable success.

“We want to honour these indi-

viduals who have shown dedication and commitment to push ahead with their dreams.”

He said the participants who became entrepreneurs after completing ECERDC’s human capital development programmes had created more than 19,000 jobs.

“More importantly, 93 per cent of participants are from the B40 (bottom 40 per cent) income group, including single mothers, unemployed youths, the disabled, Orang Asli, (and those from) the Chinese and Indian (communities), underscoring our commitment to developing ECER in an inclusive and sustainable manner.”

To accelerate ECER’s growth towards becoming a developed and high-income region by 2020, he

said, the Federal Government had allocated another RM1.2 billion under Rolling Plan 1 of the 11th Malaysia Plan to execute 12 new human capital development and socio-economic programmes, and high-impact projects.

Jebasingam said ECER was on course to secure targeted private investments of RM110 billion by 2020, adding that the region had recorded RM89.7 billion in foreign and domestic investments to date.

He said approved investments worth RM15 billion were undertaken by Bumiputera companies.

“This represents 22.1 per cent of the total investments approved in ECER, highlighting the region’s success in achieving the nation’s goal of (raising) Bumiputera equity.”