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Najib wants 17,679 settlers to 'return' to FELDA

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PUTRAJAYA: A total of 17,679 settlers have been given a second chance to "repent" and return to the fold of FELDA so that they can enjoy the incentives announced at this year's FELDA Settlers Day celebration yesterday.

The 17,679 are those who do not sell their produce to Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) and those who have taken legal action against the authority.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said they had six months to do so.

"As a sincere gesture and in the spirit of unity, I want to announce that for the first time ever we will give a chance to the 17,679 settlers to come back to FELDA.

"They have six months, starting from next month, to reunite with FELDA and fulfil the conditions set by the authority," he told about 25,000 settlers.

Once they had done so, they could benefit from the incentives that would be enjoyed by 94,956 settlers, Najib said.

The announcements included a

debt disposal plan, cash incentives, the setting up of a special fund, grants and a housing incentive.

Najib said the 25,000-strong crowd present yesterday signalled the strong support of settlers for the Umno and Barisan Nasional-led government.

"Putrajaya is chosen for this year's celebration because of the close ties between FELDA and the government since its inception (on July 1, 1956) by my late father, Tun Abdul Razak, the second prime minister.

"Since then, there have been so many success stories, and Putrajaya's existence is possible because of the contribution from FELDA settlers.

"Each settler has a share in Putrajaya," he said to roaring approval from the crowd.

Present were cabinet ministers, including Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong,



Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Razali Ibrahim and FELDA chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad.

Later, Shahrir said most of the incentives could be enjoyed by any of the 17,679 should they reunite with FELDA.

"The only thing they will not get is the incentive to dispose a portion of their loans for FGV (Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd) shares."

Najib had earlier explained that those who had never serviced their loans for the FGV shares would not get the incentive.

On loans incurred by settlers,

Razali said the loan payment would be deducted from the sales they made when they sold their produce to FELDA.

"When some settlers don't sell their produce to FELDA, this is when we face debt defaults."

On how much the 17,679 settlers owed FELDA, Shahrir declined to

reveal the number to avoid embarrassing them, but he hinted that the amount was high.

He also clarified the incorrect perception that FELDA settlers who had shares in FGV had suffered huge losses when the company's share price went down.

"Under the Saham Amanah FELDA system, settlers enjoy additional dividends from 730 million FGV shares owed by FELDA on top of what they get from their shares."

On this matter, he urged some quarters to stop spinning news on the Internet about things that they did not fully understand.