

PM: Pekan Agropolitan project will raise Orang Asli income
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PEKAN: The Pekan Agropolitan project will not only turn the district into the biggest hub for Dorper sheep in the region, but it will also help increase the income of Orang Asli participants to RM5,000 a month.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the project was expected to breed about 25,000 Dorper sheep by 2015.

The project in Runchang, near here, was launched by Najib on Aug 4, 2009, and it has now been expanded to Batu 8 and Tanjung Batu.

The primary economic activity at Runchang and Batu 8 is Dorper sheep-rearing while growing oil palm is the key economic activity in Tanjung Batu.

Najib said the project had already proven successful by providing a steady monthly income of between RM750 and RM1,200 to the 200 participants, including 102 Orang Asli.

"It has also helped transform the Orang Asli mindset and work culture, as many of them are now willing to work more than five hours a day," he said when launching the Pekan Heritage Waterfront project and East Coast Economic Region (ECER) Pekan Dorper charity auction here yesterday.

Present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob and ECER Development Council chief executive officer Datuk Jebasingam Issace John.

Najib said the Agropolitan project was one of the initiatives under the ECER to help develop the region and improve the people's livelihood.

He said ECER managed to attract RM20.9 billion in investments and created 27,000 jobs as at December last year, while another RM10 billion was recorded in the first quarter of this year.

On the Pekan Heritage Waterfront, Najib said it would help turn the royal town into a leading tourist attraction in ECER.

The project involves the upgrading of Jalan Sultan Ahmad and the Sultan Abu Bakar museum, as well as the construction of kiosks for traders of traditional products such as the Royal Tenun.

A modern food court, as well as a marketing and exhibition complex for small- and medium-sized enterprises will also be completed under the project next year.

Najib, who is Pekan member of parliament, also witnessed a charity auction of Dorper sheep among 12 corporate bidders. The auction raised about RM470,000, which would be channelled back to the participants of the Agropolitan project.

Najib later called on Ketapang Hilir Umno branch permanent chairman Abdul Manaf Sudin, 57, whose house was razed in a fire on Friday.

He also presented RM20,000 to Manaf on behalf of Yayasan Rahah and the state government.

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