

PM: MYAGROSIS Can Turn Tertiary Institutions Into Food Production Core
Bernama
December 17, 2011

SUNGAI PETANI, Dec 17 (Bernama) -- MyAgrosis, or the Agriculture Graduate Entrepreneurs Club, launched Saturday, can make tertiary institutions to be at the core of the country's food production, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said.

Najib said the initiative would also help the country tackle its food import deficit.

"At the moment we are exporting RM18 billion worth of food products a year but our import is RM30 billion. We are faced with a huge deficit; so MyAgrosis will help us patch it up with new approaches," he said when launching the club and declaring open the Youth and Graduate Entrepreneurs Gathering at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Merbok, near here.

He said that an increase in food production would shield the people from being burdened by the high cost of living.

"The high cost of living is due to the cost of foodstuff. So the best way to ease the burden is to increase the food production in the country," he said.

The prime minister also announced an allocation of RM30 million to help the MyAgrosis programme.

Of the total, RM10 million will be for Agrobank to provide guarantor-free loan scheme to MyAgrosis members with a ceiling amount of RM30,000 to venture into agro-businesses.

The rest of the amount will be allocated to Tekun Nasional and the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry, with an allocation of RM10 million each.

Tekun will provide funds for MyAgrosis participants while the ministry will provide facilities for MyAgrosis programmes such as hydroponics and water supply systems.

The new allocation for Agrobank brings the bank's total fund for the programme to RM20 million.

Najib said the provision of the funds marked the government's total support for MyAgrosis.

Speaking to reporters later, Najib said MyAgrosis fulfilled various criteria including bringing together two ministries -- the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry and Higher Education Ministry -- to collaborate in the country's agriculture development sector.

"It also exposes graduates to the sector in its new paradigm, that is, agriculture as a business model as well as a business concept.

"It will also increase the country's agricultural productivity and put in place more agro-bazaar networks where food products are sold at a reasonable price," he said.

Najib said universities had vast tract of unused land which can be optimised through the MyAgrosis programme.

Present at the event were Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Noh Omar, Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Mohd Johari Baharom, Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Mukhriz Tun Dr Mahathir, Federal Agriculture Marketing Authority chairman Datuk Badruddin Amiruldin and UiTM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Sahol Hamid Abu Bakar.

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