

Najib: Pakatan denying FELDA settlers wealth by opposing listing
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JENGKA, May 8 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak today accused Pakatan Rakyat (PR) of denying FELDA settlers a life of “prosperity” with the pact’s attacks against the federal land authority’s listing exercise.

The prime minister stressed the “controversial” issue of FELDA Global Venture Holding’s (FGVH) listing was one created by PR and that its claims were mere lies.

“We have proven that we are able to give wealth to FELDA settlers. The controversial listing issue is for the benefit of FELDA settlers,” he told reporters after announcing a RM1.69 billion windfall for all FELDA settlers today.

“The opposition are at their wits’ end of what to do now (after the announcement today).

“They had tried to deny settlers prosperity,” Najib added.

He also said that the listing exercise will likely take place next month, but declined to provide further details.

Najib earlier today announced a RM1,689,525,000 windfall for all FELDA settlers and staff throughout the country, ahead of FGVH’s listing and an expected general election.

The prime minister said that all FELDA settlers would receive a windfall of RM15,000 each through three different phases — RM5,000 for settlers (phase 1) RM5,000 for their wives (phase 2) and RM5,000 for the second-generation settlers (phase 3).

“These (payments) come from FELDA’s own strength. We do not utilise government funds.

“Kita usahakan transformasi, bukan reformasi (We are about transformation),” he said.

Najib’s announcement today will likely put a dent to PR-aligned National FELDA Settlers’ Children’s Association (Anak) who have long fought against FGVH’s listing plans.

Critics contend that the proposed listing will short-change smallholders and saddle FELDA with up to RM1.5 billion in yearly deficits.

FGVH subsidiaries such as FELDA Iffco Sdn Bhd, FELDA Global Technologies, FELDA Global Ventures Middle East and FELDA Global Ventures Arabia are reported to have chalked up accumulated losses of around RM500 million up to last year.

The profitable FELDA Holdings has a workforce of some 19,000 employees, with a labour force of 46,795 workers at 300 estates, 70 palm oil mills, seven refineries, four kernel-crushing plants, 13 rubber factories, manufacturing plants and several logistic and bulking installations spread throughout Malaysia and several locations overseas.

The government has said the move will result in a RM5.9 billion lump-sum payment to settlers but Anak has insisted it will not be in cash but shares in FGVH.

The listing of the plantation giant was promised by the Najib to be a "windfall" for the FELDA settlers, a traditional vote bank for Umno.

It is seen as important to ensuring continued support from the settlers in the upcoming general election which widely expected to be held by July.

FGVH is a 100 per cent subsidiary of FELDA, a statutory body under the Prime Minister's Department.

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