

Najib reveals own melon project earning RM500,000 a year
TheStarOnline
February 26, 2013
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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak revealed his farming "credentials" and cited the success of his personal rock melon project to bring home the importance of innovation in agriculture.

Speaking at the launch of the Farmers' Organisation Authority of Malaysia (LPP) tower office block, Najib said a 2.4ha rock melon plot at his official residence Seri Perdana in Putrajaya has been raking in RM500,000 in profit annually.

The Prime Minister told an audience of more than 2,000 LPPM staff and farmers that he started his farming project after learning of a method of planting where liquid fertiliser is drip-fed to plants.

"Seri Perdana has become a rock melon production site after I asked a certain party to carry out the project, which is now giving profits of half a million ringgit a year," said Najib, drawing laughter and applause from the audience yesterday.

He said his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor donated the proceeds from the plot to charity, while his aide later said that the project was started in 2010.

Najib used the example in his speech to underscore the importance of finding new methods to increase productivity and raise the income levels of farmers.

"Agriculture is very important to our country and cannot be allowed to remain without proper assistance because we want to see this sector become vibrant and dynamic," he said.

Apart from innovative methods to increase yields, the Government would also help bring farmers closer to their markets.

"This is why rural transformation centres were opened in order to benefit farmers and our plan is to eventually have one in each state," said Najib.

The Prime Minister said the Government would also introduce "21st century villages", an initiative where selected farmers will receive help to undertake high-tech farming projects with the aim of boosting their earnings.

He also announced a RM28mil allocation for small-scale farmers operating plots smaller than 2ha who will receive aid in the form of fertiliser, seeds and equipment.

The recipients will be selected from among the 800,000 members of LPP.

The aid will also be used to fund training programmes for Kor Tani, a body comprising young farmers between 16 and 40 years old, with 6,000 members.

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