

RM1.7mil a month to beautify Felda schemes

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PUTRAJAYA: Felda has announced an allocation of RM1.68mil a month to beautify all the 317 schemes nationwide.

The funding would continue until "all the schemes have been beautified and turned into garden communities," according to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

In addition, RM10,000 would be given to each settler whose house needs repairs and "sprucing up", while those intending to renovate their houses could apply for an interest-free loan of up to RM40,000 with a repayment period of 15 years.

There are currently 3,663 units of houses needing repair, at a total cost of RM36.6mil, while 5,907 settlers have applied for the house renovation loan.

"We want Felda settlements to become a role model in the rural area, where cleanliness, aesthetic value and proper living conditions are emphasised.

"We also have plans to secure a better future for the younger generation in Felda schemes, and the most noted one is the collaboration with AirAsia to allow eligible children of settlers to train for the airline's pilot programme.

"The settlers used blood, sweat and tears to start this programme 50 years ago and we want

»If at one time, they were barely able to survive, today they are proud owners of land and bungalows«

DATUK SERI NAJIB TUN RAZAK

to see similar commitment, determination and discipline in developing Felda for the next 50 years," Najib said when launching Settlers Day Golden Jubilee celebration yesterday.

He said that five candidates were currently being interviewed by AirAsia for its training programme, adding Felda would fork out RM180,000 for each eligible candidate to undergo 18 months of training.

Najib also paid tribute to the settlers, saying that although they faced hardship, danger, uncertainty and even poverty in their early days, many could now be proud of their

achievements and accomplishments.

"If at one time, they were barely able to survive, today they are proud owners of land and bungalows. Some are even *towkays*. They can be proud of their accomplishments which were achieved through hard work and sheer grit," he added.

Najib said while the "old kind of determination" was still needed to continue to face future challenges, new and innovative ways as well as vision were equally necessary to bring Felda to greater heights.

This, he said, could be achieved by providing better educational opportunities for the second and third generation of the Felda community, adding that the aim was to ensure youth in the schemes would not stop learning after completing their SPM.

"Felda has spent RM121mil so far to train 15,000 youth at various institutions, including 70 youths who are undergoing aircraft maintenance engineering programme.

"For Felda to continue to succeed, the future generation must take on a different mindset and be open-minded to changes," he said.

There are 112,635 families in Felda settlements nationwide, with a population close to one million.