

# RRIM to receive more govt funds

By SHARIF HARON

THE Government is prepared to allocate additional funds for the Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia (RRIM) to step up its research activities.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that he is satisfied with the progress and achievement of the institute as well as the performance of its researchers.

"But I feel the institute should step up its research activities and the Government, as far as it can, will give assistance, including financial aid," he told reporters at the end of his visit to the RRIM's research centre in Sungai Buloh.

At present, RRIM's research activities are funded by the re-

search cess. About \$58 million is collected in research cess each year.

"We have not fixed the amount to top up the research cess. But if and once the Primary Industries Ministry submits the request, we will consider," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said.

Primary Industries Minister Datuk Dr Lim Keng Yaik, who accompanied the Prime Minister throughout the visit, said his ministry will soon submit to the Cabinet a request for additional funds.

Chairman of the Malaysian Rubber Research and Development Board (MRRDB) who is also Controller of Rubber Research Ahmad Farouk Haji

S.M. Ishak earlier said additional funds were necessary for the activities of the RRIM's technology centre.

During the visit, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was taken around to see the latest activities of the Sungai Buloh research centre and their discovery.

The Prime Minister said the research activities are useful in developing the country's rubber industry, and the findings show that the objectives of the RRIM have been achieved.

He added among those that can be exploited is the research into epoxidised natural rubber (ENR), which can compete with the synthetic rubber in several areas. The institute has been able to use ENR to make adhesive that is strong enough

to bind rubber with metal and metal with metal.

"It is hoped that more research activities will enable the country to improve its products like tyres. Rubber-based industries can expand if we improve efficiency and thorough having large operations to take advantage of the economies of scale," he said.

Asked whether the Arab investors who were in the country last week were interested to venture into rubber-based industries and rubber products manufacturing, the Prime Minister said it was up to them to choose the type of industries they wished to invest in.

"However, rubber-based industries are among the sectors that we have suggested to them," he added.

On reports from the United States that the US authorities have suspended temporarily imports of condom from two Malaysian manufacturers, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said these will be studied by the Government.

He said the Government could not say whether it was a deliberate attempt to sabotage Malaysian products without conducting a proper study. "As far as we know, our manufacturers test the products that they export."

On reports that the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) is planning to acquire a piece of the RRIM's land which is located near the Subang Airport, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the plan is not final.

"I think the move will affect RRIM research activities. The question now is can this be discussed with the DCA?" he said.