

Govt to help smallholders hit by rubber price decline

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SIK: The Government is looking into ways to help rubber smallholders who face problems due to falling rubber prices.

"When the price of rubber drops they (smallholders) are angry with the Government but they must understand that we did not contribute to this situation," said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

He said the price fall was due to synthetic rubber and oversupply of natural rubber in the market.

"The Government, however, is looking at ways to help

smallholders who face problems due to the declining price of rubber.

"We want to find a way to increase prices," he said at a dialogue with Sik and Baling Umno division members here.

Dr Mahathir asked rubber smallholders to diversify and improve their livelihood by cultivating other crops.

"You (rubber smallholders) should search for other sources of income like cultivating lemons, watermelons, coffee or other crops to enjoy better earnings," he said.

Later, while meeting villagers in Kampung Keda in Kota

Aur near here, Dr Mahathir said that rubber smallholders felt the Government would continue helping them but they should first help themselves.

The Prime Minister said the Government had revoked its earlier plan to close facilities like Keda, Felda, Felcra and Mara.

This plan was due to the anti-government feelings of those who had benefited from the facilities, he said.

However, the Government revoked the decision as it wanted to help the poor, he said.