

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	04 JUNE 2017

WINDFALL FOR SMALLHOLDERS

NST- 4/6/2017 pg. 6

33,864 Risda scheme participants to get RM106.8m in dividend payments

HIDIR REDUAN
PEKAN
news@nst.com.my

P RIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has announced a windfall of RM106.8 million in dividend payments to rubber smallholders.

He said the dividends would be disbursed this year to participants in Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (Risda) schemes, which comprised new group rubber planting and commercial replanting programmes.

“As a government, we never stop looking for ways to safeguard the wellbeing of the people, especially those in rural areas where smallholders are given appropriate assistance.”

Najib said this during his speech at a national-level dividend payment event at the Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Convention Hall here yesterday.

He said the focus on development in rural areas would be continued to ensure a balanced national development that was equal and fair between urban and rural areas, and between different ethnic groups.

Risda will pay the dividends to 33,864 smallholders. Last year, it



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob (front row, third from right) with a mock cheque for RM106.8 million at a dividend payment event in Pekan yesterday. PIC BY FARIZUL HAFIZ AWANG

disbursed RM94.5 million to smallholders.

Najib said the government had succeeded in closing the gap between urban and rural areas.

“Unlike other countries where development is focused in the capital and administrative centres, Malaysia’s development is distributed to every corner of the country.”

Najib said Malaysia enjoyed increased economic growth in the first quarter of this year, thanks to the improvement in the country’s commodity exports.

He said he managed to convince China during his working visit there last month, to increase its purchase of palm oil products from Malaysia by 70 per cent.

“I also convinced India to in-

crease its import of palm oil from us,” he said, adding that Malaysia had enjoyed a gradual rise in natural rubber prices.

At the event, Najib, who is also Pekan member of parliament, mingled with members of the audience to hand over their dividends in cash.

Present were Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob and Risda chairman Datuk Zahidi Zainul Abidin.

In **Kuantan** later, Najib said security forces must uphold *wala’* (loyalty) when discharging their duties to safeguard and defend the country against internal and external incursions.

Wala’, he said, was one of the Islamic principles to obey the *ulul*

amri or leader who was elected through proper process.

“Failure to remain loyal or adopt *wala’* can bring down or destroy an entire empire and the nearest example is the Lahad Datu incident in Sabah in 2013, which caused six of our security personnel to be brutally killed.

“There were people who held positions in the security forces who betrayed and gave information on the security forces’ movements to the enemy.

“The enemy was waiting for the police force and this caused six policemen to be killed,” Najib said after performing *isyak* and *tarawih* prayers at Al-Ikhwan surau of the 10th mile army camp.