

PM: Turn idle land into rubber plantations
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PEKAN: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has urged the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (Risda) to help turn idle land and old rubber smallholdings into rubber plantations.

He said with the agency's experience and success in helping smallholders, he was confident it could do this and help increase the productivity of participants of such a scheme.

"There are many idle lands which can be turned into rubber and oil palm plantations and Risda can help develop them, depending on the allocation (from the government)."

Najib was speaking to reporters after presenting Risda dividends to smallholders here yesterday.

A total of 42,206 smallholders nationwide received RM179.6 million as last year's dividends for their participation in Risda's integrated new planting and commercial replanting schemes.

A preliminary study by Risda shows that there are at least 3,000ha of idle land in the peninsula that can be developed into rubber plantations.

Najib also asked Risda to prepare a new economic model and action plan that could help increase the smallholders' income regardless of the size of their rubber holdings or the world rubber price.

Among other things, smallholders should be encouraged to use the latest technology in rubber planting and tapping techniques which could increase productivity.

He said with better and steady income, smallholders did not have to switch to other sectors or seek employment elsewhere.

Najib also presented duit raya from Risda to 230 orphans.

He later joined a breaking of fast function with DRB-Hicom staff at Sri Maulana mosque and performed terawih prayers at Kampung Padang Polo mosque.

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