

**Rubber Smallholders Must Be More Proactive In Generating Income - Najib
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PEKAN, June 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on Saturday said rubber smallholders in the country must proactively think of ways to diversify their source of income in the uncertain global economy.

Najib said they should not depend solely on income from tapping rubber in the light of the dropping price of the commodity currently.

"Don't just depend on rubber, we must have income from several sources, it will be tough if we have only one source especially when the price of rubber drops.

"The government itself has channeled RM29 million for a programme to boost the income of smallholders, so endeavor to find additional sources of income to meet family needs," he said.

He said this at a ceremony to hand over the 2016 Risda dividend and the launching of the smallholders death benefits scheme at the Sultan Ahmad Shah Convention Hall here.

Also present were Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, his deputy Datuk Ahmad Jazlan Yaakub and Risda chairman Datuk Zahidi Zainul Abidin.

During the ceremony, he also announced dividends of RM94.5 million to 34,121 Risda smallholders and death benefits totalling RM5.2 million with RM2,000 each being given to smallholders who had died.

The distribution of RM31 million dividends to 16,080 participants of the Cluster New Planting Scheme (RTBB) while RM63.5 million were distributed to 18,041 participants of the Commercial Replanting Schemes (TSK).

This was the second windfall announced by Najib after giving a 2016 Special Aid to Smallholders Due to the Drop in Rubber Prices of RM194 million involving a payment of RM500 each to 388,111 smallholders and tappers which was announced Friday.

Najib said the government should not be blamed when there was a drop in commodity prices such as rubber and palm oil because it was beyond the government's capability to control.

"There were times, over the last few decades, when rubber prices were sometimes high, and sometimes they tumbled.

"A few years ago, rubber was the darling of the commodity sector and the income of tappers was so lucrative that stories went around that even teachers tapped rubber before entering the classrooms.

"The price of rubber was at high levels, and when the levels were high, we get more income but if the global economy shrinks, it does not only involve rubber prices but also those of other commodities," he said.

He said the government itself took proactive measures to diversify its source of income and national economy rather than merely depend on revenue from oil and gas because it took into account the current economic scenario.

"As the government, we take certain measures to firm up our income. For example, in 2009, when I just took up the national leadership, 41 per cent of national income depended on oil and gas.

"But this year we managed to diversify the national income sources. We only depend 14 per cent on oil and gas from 41 per cent previously. Imagine, the price of oil has dropped to USD30 a barrel now from USD110 a barrel.

"If this happens, the government will definitely have less income and cannot possibly make the one-off payment like yesterday and other aid like BR1M and other incomes such as civil servant travel allowance have to be reduced or limited if the revenue decreases," he said.

As a government, he said the proactive measures were taken to ensure the welfare of the people and not like the opposition who knew only to talk without any action which was good and beneficial to the people.

At the same time, Najib also reiterated his stand to continue the legacy of his father Tun Abdul Razak Hussein to continue championing the welfare of the rural populace including smallholders to boost their dignity.

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