

**Najib announces RM106.81 million 'duit raya' for smallholders**  
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**He says this is in line with the government's goal to develop rural areas, adding that farmers and the rural community are the core support of the BN government.**

PEKAN: Prime Minister Najib Razak today announced a windfall of RM106.81 million in "duit raya" via dividends for 33,864 smallholders nationwide.

Of the amount, RM38.16 million is allocated to 16,080 participants of the Cluster New Planting Scheme (RTBB), while RM68.64 million is for 17,784 participants of the Commercial Replanting Scheme (TSK).

Najib said the dividend was increased by RM12.2 million compared to RM94.5 million last year.

"As a government, we never stop looking for ways to safeguard the welfare of the people, especially of those living in rural areas, including smallholders who are given proper attention and assistance.

"This is because farmers and the rural communities are the core support of the Barisan Nasional (BN) government today," he said at a ceremony for the presentation of dividends by the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (Risda) at the Pekan convention hall here.

The event was also attended by Rural and Regional Development Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob, his deputy Ahmad Jazlan Yaakub, and Risda chairman Zahidi Zainul Abidin.

Najib said the rural development agenda must be continued as the government wants the country's development to be carried out fairly and equitably regardless of urban or rural areas, ethnicity and age.

"One of the features of development in Malaysia that does not exist in other countries is that the development of the country is carried out in a balanced and fair manner in contrast to other countries where development is mainly concentrated in the capital and cities only.

"In Malaysia, we extend development to every nook and corner of the country, and to some extent it can offset the development achieved in urban areas.

"While it may not be the same as in urban areas, at least the gap does not differ much," he said.

According to Najib, the global and national economies are in better condition this year compared to last year. He said Malaysia in the first quarter of this year recorded an economic growth rate of 5.6%, which is among the highest in the world.

“Commodity prices are also showing signs of recovery, and this is happening not only because the current world economy is improving, but also due to efforts taken by the government.

“For example, during my visit to China at the end of last year, I requested that they increase palm oil imports, and recently when I visited the country, the republic’s supreme leader informed that because of my request, they have increased the purchase (of palm oil).

“The purchase increased by 70% in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period last year, and likewise when I went to India, I also asked them to increase palm oil imports,” he said.

He said the efforts taken had also resulted in other commodity prices rising, including that of rubber.

At the event, Najib also presented RM10,000 to five mosques in the Pekan parliamentary constituency in conjunction with the holy month of Ramadan.

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