

Government approves RM338 million to help rubber smallholders nationwide

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BALING, March 20 (Bernama) -- The government has approved an allocation of RM338 million to implement Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA) development programmes this year, which is expected to benefit 552,543 smallholders nationwide.

Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali said the allocation was meant for the implementation of rubber replanting programme, development of basic agricultural infrastructure, additional economic and entrepreneurship activities, rubber productivity incentive scheme, as well as service expansion and training for rubber smallholders.

“Of the total, the government has set aside RM37 million for RISDA smallholders in Kedah,” he said at the Rubber Industry Smallholders Appreciation Programme at Kampung Lalang near here today.

Also present was Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Tun Mahathir.

Elaborating, Mohamed Azmin said the allocation for Kedah would include RM1.5 million as basic agricultural infrastructure aid and another RM3.5 million for the rubber productivity incentive scheme and improvement programmes.

“This reflects the commitment and sincerity of the state government, as well as the federal government under the leadership of Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in helping to build a better future for the rubber smallholders.

“In Kedah alone, I was told that there are 73,642 rubber smallholders working on 112,000 hectares of rubber plantation,” he said, adding that the government would strive to ensure

that the smallholders would not be heavily burdened by the drop in the price of the commodity.

Meanwhile, Mohamed Azmin said RISDA has agreed to immediately open special counters to facilitate rubber smallholders in making IPG claims.

“Among the problems faced by the smallholders in making IPG claims is the bureaucracy. We know that RISDA has its office in every district and state, but the Malaysian Rubber Board (MRB) did not have the same structure. So, smallholders have to go through a complicated process in making IPG claims to the MRB.

“I have discussed this with RISDA and they have agreed to open special counters at their offices to help these smallholders in making their IPG claims,” he said.

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