

Musa: Latex-processing factory to be built

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PITAS (Sabah): There are plans to build a factory to process the latex from a 10,000ha rubber-planting scheme for 2,500 poor families on the Bengkoka peninsula.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman said the area would produce between 15,000 and 20,000 metric tonnes of rubber annually in five years. The revenue is estimated at between RM105 million

and RM140 million a year.

He said the rubber latex clone species planted on the Bengkoka peninsula was projected to produce 143,000 metric tonnes of rubber wood when the area was ready for replanting.

"We hope that with this project, the Bengkoka peninsula will be transformed into an economic zone. It will provide poor people here with a sustainable income

and move them out of the poverty bracket," he said at the launch of the project by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday.

Smallholders said they were honoured that the Prime Minister had come to the remote area.

"I feel happy and I will work harder. Our Prime Minister is serious about the project because he came here. It shows that we

are doing the right thing," Vinnie Gagayan, 28, said.

Her friends — Fellycia Lunsin, 18, Querin Lumbiling, 21 and Failischiah Majus, 27 — were quick to support her.

Lunsin said: "It is hard work but we know that this project will improve our lives. We are poor people, but maybe we will not be poor for long. This place will see more progress."