

## **Malaysia: Another 20,000 ha developed as rubber plantations**

KUCHING: Another 20,000 hectares of land had been open up for rubber plantations in the state this year to produce high quality rubber for the China market. Modernisation of Agriculture Minister and Rural Development Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu Numpang said this was an addition to the existing 16,000 hectares of matured plantation and the 8,250 hectares which had just been cultivated last year. "At present, most of the plantations are in Betong, Saratok, Engkilili and Sri Aman. The state government targets to open up 250,000 hectares of rubber plantation across Sarawak by 2020," he added. Jabu also highlighted that the strong collaboration between China and Sarawak to modernise and commercialise the rubber plantation sector was established some seven to eight years ago following the signing of a memorandum of understanding and agreement with Guangdong Agribusiness Corporation (GDA). The collaboration has thus led to the setting up of a high quality rubber processing factory by Guangken Rubber Industry Standard Malaysian Rubber in Debak, Betong which is now operational. Adding on, Jabu said: "All the latex harvested from the rubber trees in the plantations in Betong, Saratok, Engkilili and Sri Aman are basic raw material which are then processed into Standard Malaysian Rubber equivalent to SMR 20. SMR will be packed and exported to Guangdong Province in China," he elaborated. "The collaboration some seven years ago started with an initial investment of RM33.66 million to open up a SMR factory with a capacity to produce 20,000 tonnes in the initial stage. I believe the cooperation will be enhanced following the high demand from China for high quality rubber," he added. Jabu said this after receiving a courtesy call from a Chinese delegation led by director general of Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China, Li Jianhua, here yesterday. The delegation comprising eight officials and representatives from government offices and corporations were here on a three-day exchange visit. They had visited the Guangken Rubber Industry Standard Malaysia Rubber factory in Debak, Betong and they are scheduled to return home today. Jabu, who is also Deputy Chief Minister, said his ministry had since then been preparing nurseries for high yield rubber. "The existing nurseries of 40 acres in Betong are not sufficient and half the areas have been developed," he said. "My ministry in collaboration with Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (Risda), Malaysia Rubber Board (LGM) and State Agriculture Department (JPN) will expand the existing nurseries," he added. "That apart, another new nursery which is close to 40 acres near Debak will also be developed. We will also get the involvement of commercial nurseries with terms that they must be monitored by Risda, LGM and JPN to ensure the quality of rubber produced," he further said. Jabu said high yield rubber produced using biotechnology have the potential to yield between 2,300 and 2,800 kg of latex per hectare annually unlike ordinary ones which only produce 800 to 900 kg of latex per hectare a year. Participants of the programme, he said, would be provided with a 10-acre land planted with high yield rubber which can be tapped after five years and bring income of about RM3,000 a month. [theborneopost.com](http://theborneopost.com)