

Replanting, new plantations aimed at controlling rubber supply – Noriah

THE Plantation Industries and Commodities Ministry targets to replant 37,282 hectares of rubber and open 13,000 hectares of new rubber plantations in the country this year, the Dewan Negara was told yesterday. Deputy minister Datuk Noriah Kasnon said the plan was a mechanism under the National Key Economic Area (NKEA) for rubber plantations. She said it was aimed at controlling the supply of natural rubber in the world through replanting programmes and new plantations in collaboration with two other major rubber-producing countries in Asean, namely Thailand and Indonesia. “Last year, the programme saw the replanting 36,470 hectares of rubber and the opening of 12,802 hectares of new plantations,” she said when replying to a question from Senator Datuk Boon Som Inong. The senator had wanted to know the latest rubber prices; the cause of the fall in rubber prices; the mechanism to stabilise the prices and whether Asean could determine the prices of rubber in accordance with its position as the world’s leading producer of the commodity. Noriah said though Asean member nations could not determine the prices of rubber as there was no pact among them on the matter, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia had established collaboration under the International Tripartite Rubber Council (ITRC) to stabilise the prices of rubber. She said the Total Export Scheme agreed to in 2012 required the three ITRC countries to cut export of natural rubber by 300,000 tonnes. For the six months from October 1, 2012, to March 31, 2013, the average price of SMR 20 rubber rose from RM7.99 a kilogramme in August 2012 to RM9.26 per kilogramme in February 2013, she said. In this regard, Noriah said, the ministry was committed to fighting competition between natural rubber and synthetic rubber by the continuous promotion of natural rubber. “The promotion was conducted in the major markets (of China, Europe, the United States, Japan and South Korea) as well as the new markets (of the Middle East, the countries that had made up the former Soviet Union, Africa and South America),” she said. Bernama