

Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand committed to developing Rubber City

BY LINDA KHOO

BANGKOK: The world's top producers of natural rubber — Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand — are committed to strengthening collaboration to develop Rubber City in the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) region to boost rubber consumption and promote downstream industry development.

Centre for IMG-GT Subregional Cooperation (CIMT) director Firdaus Dahlan said the four Rubber City sites — Kedah in Malaysia, Songkhla (Southern Thailand), Tanjung Api-Api (Southern Sumatra) and Sei Mangkei Special Economic Zone in Simalungun, North Sumatra, Indonesia would venture into downstream activities and manufacture of value-added products.

"Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are the leading producers of natural rubber to the world market and most of the rubber plantations and production are in the IMT-GT area. The three countries need to strengthen collaboration to boost domestic rubber consumption and stabilise the

rubber price in the global market.

"We will establish Project Implementation Team soon. It will be led by the private sector and facilitated by the governments to explore opportunities in downstream rubber industry in the IMT-GT region," he told *Bernama*.

Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand collectively account for 66% of the global natural rubber production. In April this year, the three countries agreed to cut natural rubber exports by 240,000 tonnes for a period of four months.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo chaired the 12th IMT-GT Summit in Bangkok last Sunday, which was held in conjunction with the 34th Asean Summit.

Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Thai Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan o-cha and Asean Secretary-General Datuk Lim Jock Hoi and Asian Development Bank (ADB) president Takehiko Nakao attended as development partners.

IMT-GT is a subregional cooperation initiative formed in 1993. It comprises 14 provinces in southern Thailand, eight states of Peninsular Malaysia, and 10 provinces of Sumatra in Indonesia.

Single-entry visa for IMT-GT areas mooted

Meanwhile, Firdaus said Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are working together to promote joint tourism circuit and route with the diversity among its tourism destinations to increase tourist arrivals in the three countries.

"Tourism is one of our flagship programmes. During the meeting, we proposed single-entry visa for the IMT-GT areas. It is still a proposal. We will pursue the matter after the summit," he said.

At the 12th IMT-GT Summit in Bangkok, Firdaus said the report on implementation of projects and progress actions upon seven key strategic pillars of IMT-GT was presented to the leaders.

With technical assistance from ADB, this year IMT-GT conducted assessment of the five existing IMT-GT economic corridors and a study on the proposed sixth corridor linking three southern border provinces of Thailand (Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat) with Perak and Kelantan in Malaysia, and southern Sumatra in Indonesia to enhance trade, tourism, and physical connectivity.

— *Bernama*

