

Kuala Lumpur to help rural tobacco farmers

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THE MALAYSIAN government has pledged to continue helping small-time tobacco farmers seek an alternative source of income.

This follows the decision by cigarette manufacturers to stop purchasing local tobacco leaves on April 1, said Deputy Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Noriah Kasnon.

She said the tobacco industry in Malaysia was shifting due to changes in international trade and an increase in awareness on public health.

"The need to restructure the tobacco industry is in line with the country's commitment to liberalise the market under the Asean Free Trade Area and the control of tobacco use under the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

"I've been made to understand

that the LKTN (National Kenaf and Tobacco Board) is in the process of implementing several programmes to help rural tobacco farmers who are less competitive to switch to other economies, such as kenaf planting," Noriah said at the launch of the 2013 Tobacco Seminar here on Tuesday.

She added that exports of tobacco and its products had increased by 48.7 per cent to 1.57 billion ringgit in 2012 compared with 1.06 billion ringgit in 2011.

Exports for the first half of this year were 579.04 million ringgit, down 18.7 per cent from the same period in 2012. "The tobacco industry contributed 3.52 billion ringgit to the country's tax income last year, compared with 3.42 billion ringgit in 2011, which was an increase of 2.8 per cent.

"The amount was contributed through tax collection such as excise duty, import duty, sales tax and corporate taxes," Noriah said.