

**Thursday September 7, 2006**

**Over 50% of projects face problems**

OVER half the Malaysian Rubber Board's Integrated Farming Programme projects failed or have problems, said the 2005 Auditor-General's Report. Of the 14 projects, one showed potential to succeed, five were satisfactory, four had problems, while another four failed.



**ALL IN A DAY'S WORK:** File photo of a rubber tapper tapping a rubber tree at an estate in Pendang, Kedah, on Aug 30.

The report said that from 2003 till June last year, apart from the fish project in Batang Ai, Sri Aman, Sarawak, none of the projects were able to make a return on capital as set out in the board's business plan.

Nine of the projects showed low returns (between 0.3% and 17.9%) while the orange and pineapple farms in Kg Lembah Arang in Kelantan, the gourami (*ikan sepat*) farm in Kg Tehel in Malacca and the goat farm in Kg Pancar Jaya showed zero returns.

The programme was implemented to reduce the burden of rubber smallholders if and when rubber production declined.

It was one of the efforts to increase the productivity and income of rubber smallholders in keeping with the Third National Agricultural Policy and the National Economic Recovery Plan.

The report acknowledged that the board had a satisfactory plan for carrying out integrated farming but no one unit or division or officers were specifically responsible for the implementation of the project.

There was no set and written criteria for choosing a farm site, project and participants for the programme; nor were there training plans.

The report recommended that the board identify the main problems and provide the project participants with continuous guidance. It should select participants who were interested and committed and its Marketing Committee needed to ensure that the marketing system worked.