

Understand new concept of co-op bodies: Dr M

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir today called for a better understanding of the new concept on the role and underlying philosophy of co-operative societies.

This, he said, would help in reducing friction between the societies and departments dealing with them.

The Prime Minister said co-operative societies today had outgrown the old concept of being merely thrift and loan societies to enable members to borrow money for special occasions or to make ends meet.

The role of co-operatives today was more that of holding companies which could have subsidiary companies that could venture into all kinds of businesses.

Speaking at the annual meeting of Koperasi Usaha Bersatu, the Umno co-operative, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the fault could not be placed on either the Government officers or the management of cooperatives for the friction.

The officials, he said, had been performing their duties according to the old concept and that this could be corrected.

KUB chairman Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin had earlier requested that the Government review what the underlying concept and role of cooperatives should be to better facilitate the economic development of members

and the nation.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Co-operative Department, however, also had a role to play to ensure that co-operatives do not rush into businesses they are not familiar with, resulting in losses.

He said the change in the concept of co-operative societies entailed certain problems which the Ministry and departments should iron out.

He said department officials should attend meetings of the various cooperatives to understand their operations better.

Capital

He congratulated the board of directors of KUB for their dedicated efforts but added that no such congratulations could be extended to Umno members who had the means to invest in the cooperative but did not do so.

Taking note of the fact that only 39,427 of the 872,796 Umno members had joined the cooperative, he said he had spoken to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam regarding the drive to enlist more Umno members.

He said if each member could enlist another the membership would double, ensuring a bigger capital for the cooperative to widen its scope of operations.

Datuk Seri Dr

Mahathir said he would like to see the KUB develop into one of the country's largest concerns.

He said there was no mystery behind large sophisticated businesses.

Many Malays had ventured into big business and the success of many of them, including KUB, was evidence of this, he added.

He said those who did not have the expertise nor the time could invest in bodies that did.

The Prime Minister said although the Government felt the loss of expertise resulting from the resignation of a number of top civil servants who have ventured into business, he said he was happy that they were willing to face challenges.

In the past, employment in the public sector was considered better owing to regular salary payments and other privileges.

However, if one had the courage and the willingness to work there were profits to be reaped in the private sector, he said.

Through sheer initiative, certain countries which lacked natural resources had come to the forefront of development while others with resources had remained in the doldrums.

This was the kind of initiative that Malaysia needed to push ahead, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.