

11/10/1999

Members helped Kobena ride out crisis: Dollah

Eirmalasang Bani

DEPUTY Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday said the commitment of members made possible the National Youth Cooperative Bhd (Kobena)'s success in culling its debts from RM200 million to RM39 million last year.

Abdullah, who was Kobena's founder and chairman from 1976 to 1982, said despite facing such huge debts, depositors' unfaltering confidence helped Kobena overcome the problem.

Kobena went through some restructuring and rehabilitation beginning 1992 following the cooperatives fiasco of the late 1980s.

Since then, Kobena's depositors have increased to almost 40,000 with deposits valued at RM9 million, compared with 16,000 depositors valued at RM6 million in 1992.

"Looking at Kobena's problem at that time, almost everybody thought that the cooperative was going down," Abdullah said when officiating at Kobena's 15th general assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Kobena's chief executive Datuk Dr Mohd Fuad Ahmad said the cooperative has come up with a five-year plan (1999-2004) to strengthen its operations.

"Kobena also plans to restructure its administration so that the cooperative can be managed professionally, in line with the current development," Mohd Fuad said.

Among others, he said, Kobena plans to venture into other industries including information technology, agriculture and manufacturing.

The cooperative is now in the process of setting up a "holding company" to implement and monitor its business activities.

Meanwhile, speaking to reporters later, Abdullah said the Government's decision to state a person's religion in his identity card was agreed upon by the Cabinet some time ago but implemented only recently.

"Nowadays, Malaysians look alike... whether they are Chinese or Malay.

"This is not the decision of the National Registration Department director general. The Cabinet has approved it. As we know, Cabinet ministers are of different races and religions," he said, adding it should not be used as political issue.

Bernama reports: Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that Saturday's meeting of the Umno Supreme Council did not discuss matters relating to party personnel or officials.

"We did not discuss matters relating to party staff or officials," he told reporters who raised the matter at a press conference after he opened the delegates' meeting of Kobena yesterday.

Abdullah was reacting to a front page report of the New Straits Times on Saturday's supreme council meeting suggesting that a new party information chief would spearhead Umno's large-scale and urgent campaign to counter opposition lies and slander.

The newspaper also speculated that the Member of Parliament for Yan and Kedah Umno information chief Datuk Badrudin Amirudin will succeed Datuk Dr Yusof Nor as the new party information chief.

On the credence of such speculation, Abdullah said: "In fact I've not heard of such talk relating to this matter.

"It's better that we stop speculating about it."

Abdullah was also asked on Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir

Mohamad's directive that the Umno women's wing intensify efforts to check

female electorate from being taken in by opposition lies.

Abdullah said the Prime Minister's advice was appropriate given the crucial role of the women's wing as vote-woosers in the Barisan Nasional election machinery.

"As vote-woosers the womenfolk have proven themselves to be very effective and I'm confident that this time around they will again create this impact when campaigning for the Barisan Nasional," he said.

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