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Co-ops told to seize chances

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PETALING JAYA, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged members of the National Co-operative Organisation of Malaysia (Angkasa) to seize the opportunities offered to them.

The Prime Minister said co-operatives should grab the opportunities offered to them if they did not want to be left behind. Otherwise, the privileges may fall into the hands of foreigners.

Dr Mahathir said this in the souvenir programme book marking the 79th International Co-operative Day and 30th anniversary celebrations of Angkasa.

The double celebration was held today at Auditorium Angkasa, Wisma Ungku A. Aziz, at Kelana Jaya.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Finance Minister, urged co-operatives to have the zeal and determination to succeed in their endeavours. He hoped that they would be able to boldly face the challenges of the new era.

He also said the 79th International Co-operative Day celebration was very meaningful, not only for co-operatives, but also for Angkasa which celebrated its 30th anniversary.

Angkasa, he added, had not only won recognition nationally but also internationally.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said co-operatives should expand its roles and activities with the times.

His speech was read by Parliamentary Secretary to the Education Ministry Datuk Mahadzir Mohd Khir.

In commending Angkasa for its achievements and effective role in developing and expanding co-operatives in the country, Abdullah said it had played a role in "co-operative education".

The co-operative movement which began in Malaysia in 1922 has grown over the years, and today there are 4,100 registered co-operatives with a membership of 4.6 million.

Under the umbrella of Angkasa, Abdullah said, there were 2,561 co-operatives of which 1,110 were school co-operatives.

"This clearly shows that the co-operative movement is expanding throughout the country including in schools.

"With more people investing, co-operatives are also boosting the nation's economic and social status."

Abdullah urged registered co-operatives to become members of Angkasa so that they could enjoy the many benefits it offered.

"Malaysia is an example for many nations around the world because of its development and success. In striving for success, we have encountered many challenges especially in economic development."

Abdullah said there were countries finding opportunities to weaken the economy and thus, Malaysians must be prepared at all times to face the attack by upholding and strengthening the nation's economy.

He urged operators of co-operatives to be fully committed in their work and overcome hurdles that would weaken them and erode the trust of their members.

"Operators also have a social responsibility to ensure peace and harmony among its members who come from various races and religions," he added.

At a Press conference, Mahadzir said he would take measures to ensure that every secondary school had a co-operative for the benefit of students.

Presently, 96 per cent of secondary schools have set up co-operatives.