

# PM hopes RHB-Utama merger talks will end by this week

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he hoped the merger talks between RHB Capital Bhd and Utama Banking Group Bhd will be completed this week.

Mahathir said the talks were supposed to be completed "this week, but it's getting very late. We hope they (RHB Capital) can

merge with Bank Utama

A successful merger between RHB Capital and Utama Banking would unseat Commerce Asset-Holding Bhd as the country's second-biggest lender.

On Jan 4, Utama Banking said it was still in talks with RHB Capital group, denying reports that their merger plan was being scrapped.

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In April, RHB Capital's parent, Rashid Hussain Bhd received approval from the central bank to begin merger talks with Utama Banking, a dominant lender in the eastern state of Sarawak.

RHB Capital had assets worth RM56 billion, while Utama Banking's assets were worth RM7.4 billion at the end of

December 2000, making it more than seven times smaller than RHB Capital.

Mahathir's comment was made after the market close.

RHB Capital, the country's third-largest lender, fell 6 sen or 2.2% to RM2.64.

Utama shares gained 2 sen or 1.2% to close at RM1.71.

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