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Dr Mahathir: Tap the lucrative numismatic market

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for the establishment of infrastructure to support transactions among collectors and secondary market dealers as one way of tapping the lucrative market of numismatic collectibles.

To help transactions in the secondary market that trade in new and old coins and notes, the Prime Minister said a systematic way of disseminating information among collectors and dealers should be developed.

The setting up of a formal exchange for the secondary market was one move that should be considered, he said, adding a developed market could help sustain the continuing interest in numismatic collectibles.

"This exchange would help provide integrity in the transaction of collectibles," he said at the inauguration of the Kuala Lumpur International Money Fair (Klimof) 2002 at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, was represented by Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy, who delivered his speech.

The three-day fair, the first to be held in Malaysia, is organised by the Royal Mint of Malaysia with the aim of bringing together local and foreign numismatic collectors.

It is held in conjunction with the Kuala Lumpur Investment Fair 2002, which is jointly hosted by the Federation of Malaysian Unit Trusts Managers and the Royal Mint.

The Prime Minister said there were now market players and collectors in every major city in the world, with major international money fairs being held regularly.

Numismatics was a rewarding hobby in every sense of the word, indeed the collection of rare coins could be a form of investment as they might increase in value in the future, Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister cited the Malaysian 10 sen coin as an example. Issued by Bank Negara Malaysia as recently as 1971, it is now traded among collectors for about RM120 a piece.

This was because of the relative rarity due to limited mintage of the coin, totalling about 48,000 pieces only.

"There are also other commemorative coins issued by Bank Negara Malaysia to mark historical events which have now become collectors' items," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Royal Mint of Malaysia should also expand its role beyond just producing coins for general circulation, adding its participation in producing high quality gift items including porcelain figurines, plates, silverware and medallions was a move in the right direction.