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PM: Banks must also service small borrowers, not focus on big clients

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight urged banks to set up special departments or sections to service small borrowers and not just focus on big clients.

"Our exercise to reduce the number of banks from over 50 to 10 has been quite successful," he said at the launch of Bangunan AmFinance, the new headquarters of AmBank Group's AmFinance Berhad.

"However, I hear some complaints. Now that banks are bigger, they seem to not pay so much attention to the small people.

"Please have special facilities for the small businessmen and SMIs to get as much access to financing as those who borrow tens of hundreds of ringgit."

In jest, he said: "I must go to the bank to borrow RM10,000. If you're not prepared to give the service, then I have to rethink about having 10 banks. Maybe, we need to go back to 56 banks. I am not threatening but advising.

"But advice from the Finance Minister who also happens to be the Prime Minister is worth taking note of."

Earlier, AMBank Group chairman Tan Sri Azman Hashim said the launch marked the birth of AmBank Group's enlarged finance company resulting from the acquisition of MBf Finance last year.

Azman presented a cheque for RM1 million to Dr Mahathir to a Malaysian community project as well as RM1.2 million for the Commonwealth Partnership Technology Management.