

ASEAN AGENDA

'Prioritise cooperatives'

FAIQAH KAMARUDDIN
KUALA LUMPUR
bt@nst.com.my

ANGKATAN Koperasi Kebangsaan Malaysia Bhd (Angkasa) has requested the government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, to prioritise the recognition of cooperatives as an important sector in driving economic development across Asean during Malaysia's Asean chairmanship next year.

Angkasa president Datuk Seri Dr Abdul Fattah Abdullah said cooperatives were often perceived as limited to carrying out agricultural activities, whereas they actually spanned a wide range of sectors, including finance, tourism, health, renewable energy, information technology and logistics.

"We want cooperatives to be included in Asean's pillars or agenda, granted a greater role and clearer policies for cooperatives to operate effectively across Asean member nations."

If this happens, Asean, as the fourth-largest economic bloc by 2030, could benefit immensely.

"Asean currently has nearly 700 million people, making it the next largest region after China, India and the United States.

"This opportunity must be seized by the Asean cooperative movement," he told *Business Times*.

He said they were working towards this and aimed to strengthen the cooperative structure within Asean, recognising that there were currently 65 million cooperative members in the region.

He said this potential should be explored.

"Malaysia has already taken steps at the Asean level by working to establish the Asean Cooperative Development Bank, which has been agreed upon through resolutions formed by Asean cooperative organisations.

"We envision we will actively participate in Asean's growth as the fourth-largest economic power. If cooperatives are left behind, we will miss out on these benefits.

Therefore, in the Malaysian context, we have decided to strengthen our representation internationally, including ensuring that all Angkasa board members have a platform in any committees established.

"This includes upgrading packaging and educating cooperatives on how to export. These are among the forward-looking initiatives because we recognise that Asean will become a strong economic bloc, and cooperatives must play a role in this."



Entrepreneurship and Cooperatives Development Minister Datuk Ewon Benedick (seventh from left) and Angkatan Koperasi Kebangsaan Malaysia Bhd (Angkasa) president Datuk Seri Dr Abdul Fattah Abdullah (sixth from right) with members of cooperatives and representatives of government agencies and non-governmental organisations at the launch of the national-level International Year of Cooperatives 2025 yesterday. NSTP PIC BY AZIAH AZMEE



Fattah added that Angkasa had introduced five Asean corners, where each country was required to showcase at least 10 cooperative stock-keeping units from their regions that could be marketed internationally.

"We are requesting the prime minister to bring this up at the leadership level of Asean member countries, emphasising cooperatives as a vehicle for socioeconomic development.

"Issues such as poverty eradication, improving living standards, boosting economic levels, uniting communities and education are among the matters we want to highlight," he said.



The Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Ministry, in collaboration with Angkasa, Malaysia Cooperative Societies Commission and Institut Koperasi Malaysia, organised the launch of the national-level International Year of Cooperatives 2025 (IYC2025) yesterday.

Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Minister Datuk Ewon Benedick officiated at the event, which was attended by 700 members of cooperatives, and representatives from federal and state government agencies and non-governmental organisations.

The IYC2025 is a platform for Malaysia to empower and promote the national cooperative sector at the international level, with 16,009 cooperatives that have a membership of 7.2 million and earnings of RM33.1 billion.

For IYC2025, Malaysia has planned various programmes, including the Asean Cooperative Dialogue 2025, the National Cooperative Empowerment Convention in conjunction with the Angkasa Representative General Meeting, Coop Treasure Hunt 2025, Bulan Koperasi Kebangsaan, Hari Koperasi

Negara and a seminar on Youth for Cooperative Futures.

According to Angkasa, cooperatives and their achievements in various sectors are the pillars of the country and would remain relevant.

It said awareness of the benefits, roles, values and identity of cooperatives that prioritised inclusive economic models and social development needed to be enhanced in efforts to empower the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 agenda, in line with environmental, social and governance practices and the government's Madani aspirations.

SAMBUTAN
IN PINGGAL KEBANGSAAN



Tahun Koperasi
Antarabangsa

Angkatan Koperasi
Kebangsaan
Malaysia Bhd
(Angkasa) president
Datuk Seri Dr Abdul
Fattah Abdullah
speaking at the
launch of the
national-level
International Year of
Cooperatives 2025
yesterday. BERNAMA
PIC