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Tajuk : Sabah launches first plumbers' co-op in M'sia

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KOTA KINABALU: Sabah's plumbing industry has entered a new era with the official launch of the Koperasi Persatuan Tukang Paip Sabah Berhad, the first plumbers' association cooperative in Malaysia, positioning local stakeholders to compete for major infrastructure projects while tapping into billions in government support.

Officiating the ceremony at Sabah International Convention Centre (SICC) on Sunday (April 26), Deputy Minister of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development (Kuskop), Datuk Mohamad Alamin, described it as a "meaningful and proud moment" for the State's skilled workforce.

He commended the Sabah Plumber Association for embracing the cooperative model, calling it a strategic move that places plumbers within a powerful economic ecosystem.

"You are joining a robust movement that forms one of the backbones of our economy," he said.

Sabah has emerged as a leading force in cooperative development, with over 1,700 registered cooperatives involving nearly 350,000 members.

Between 2022 and 2026, RM93.9 million in financing has been disbursed to 34 cooperatives in the State, supporting high-impact sectors such as agriculture and tourism.

Alamin said establishing the plumbing cooperative is both timely and critical as Sabah continues to expand its infrastructure.

He stressed that proper drainage systems and pipe networks are essential for public safety and sustainable urban growth.

Through the cooperative structure, members are expected to benefit from collective bargaining for better pricing on materials and tools, access to large-scale tenders and stronger knowledge-sharing networks.

"This gives you the corporate weight to bid for high-value infrastructure contracts," he said.

He also emphasised that strong governance, transparent financial management and professional leadership would be crucial to ensure long-term sustainability.

"Without good governance, even a strong cooperative cannot survive," he added.

The initiative aligns with the vision of Suruhanjaya Koperasi Malaysia (SKM) to build competitive, resilient and progressive cooperatives that contribute effectively to national development.

Alamin reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment under its PowerUp10K campaign to scale up 10,000 businesses this year.

Among the support available are RM5 billion in low-cost financing for SMEs and cooperatives, with interest rates as low as three to five per cent, the Tabung Modal Pusingan for project and asset development, digitalisation grants of up to RM5,000 and RM2.5 billion in micro-financing through Tekun and Bank Simpanan Nasional.

"We are here to listen and gather your feedback. We want to work together with you to improve this cooperative model, ensuring it remains dynamic and effective," he said, encouraging members to play an active role in strengthening the cooperative.



Teo (left), presenting a token of appreciation to Alamin after the launching ceremony.

Earlier, Organising Chairman of Plumbing Asia 2026 Conference and Expo, Teo Seng Peng, said the launch marks a historic milestone for the nation, as Sabah becomes the first to establish a plumbers' association cooperative.

He said plumbers in Sabah have long faced challenges, including high material costs, due to lack of collective purchasing power, limited access to major contracts, absence of formal certification pathways and difficulty handling large-scale jobs without collaboration.

Teo outlined the cooperative's plans to enable bulk purchasing of tools and materials, joint bidding for government housing, school maintenance and commercial projects, and the establishment of a training academy for certification and professional development.

"This cooperative is not a project, it is a tool. When our members are stronger, Sabah becomes stronger," he said.

Chairlady of the Sabah Water Plumbing Association Cooperative, Dr Carmen Wong, described the launch as a significant step forward for members and the industry.

"Today is a very important day as we launch our koperasi. This koperasi is to help our members work together, to grow their businesses and to grab opportunities for the future," she said.

She added that unity and collaboration would be the foundation of success. "When we work together, we become stronger. We hope this koperasi will bring more opportunities to our members and help our businesses grow together. Thank you to everyone who supported this koperasi — together we grow and succeed," she said.

Also present was Tanjong Pagar Assemblyman Alex Tien, whose attendance reflected strong support for the industry's development.

At the exhibition booth area, the launch also attracted notable international and industry figures, underscoring the growing regional interest in Sabah's cooperative model.

Among others present were the Director of the Malaysia Cooperative Societies Commission Sabah, Fu Chao Chen, Director of Sewage Treatment and Reclaimed Water Management Division, Beijing Municipal Water Authority, Dr Li YuXian, Director of Technical Research Institute, Beijing Waterworks Group, Qu JiangFeng, Board Secretary of Xingtai Road and Bridge Construction Co., Ltd.; Dickrose Masalamani, President of the Singapore Plumbing Society; and Carl Moosom, Advisor of Sabah Plumber Association.