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# Plan will focus on closer ethnic integration, says PM

The Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP3) will lead to closer ethnic integration, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Mahathir said the government is looking carefully into the differences between the bumiputras and non-bumiputras, in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak and also among orang asli communities.

"We are looking more closely into the differences even between the Indians and the Chinese as the Indians have complained that they are lumped together with the Chinese," he said after tabling the OPP3 at the Dewan Rakyat.

"They (the Indians) claimed that because of this, they have suffered as when we (the government) say the non-bumiputras got so much, according to them, most of it had gone to the Chinese."

Mahathir said through the OPP3, the government has outlined what it intended to do to in the next 10 years that can help the economy and the people.

Asked about the plan to raise bumiputra shares to at least 30% in corporate equity from the present 19.1%, the prime minister said the government's target can only be achieved if there is cooperation from the bumiputras themselves.

"We will never reach that target if the bumiputras to whom we gave the shares ... instead sell them to non-bumiputras," he said.

"So the bumiputras must cooperate. The non-bumiputras must be ready to share with the bumiputras."

Mahathir said the government has given shares to the bumiputras before but they had decided to resell the shares.

He said the government

then set up Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB) and gave most shares to the agency in order to reduce reselling of shares.

Asked whether the targeted 7.5% economic growth can be met, he said it can be achieved based on past performance.

"We can achieve 7.5% growth but (this growth) is contingent upon the world economic recovery," he said.

"We are a trading nation. If the world is not doing well, we cannot grow. We can try to go for other markets, but it is not easy to build up a new market with the same strength as the world market."

On the National Unit Trust Fund, Mahathir said that it will be an extension of PNB.

Asked about the Chinese Chambers of Commerce's call to float the ringgit, he said the organisation has the right to make the call.

"The government will decide. At the moment, the government does not have any reasons to change our monetary system," he said.

"Many investors in this country, including foreigners, said that they are very comfortable with it."

Asked to comment on a report by Bloomberg News which had put Malaysia below Indonesia in terms of economic performance, Mahathir said that was the agency's right.

"Many international agencies are like this. They are actually stupid. Their accusations about Malaysia had been wrong. If you look back at all the predictions made by these agencies who claimed to know what the world economy is going to be like, their predictions about Malaysia had consistently been wrong," he said.