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3rd quarter growth may be slightly better, says PM

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he expects a slight improvement in economic figures for the third quarter of the year compared to the previous quarter.

"At the beginning, they say the downturn in the US is shortlived and it will turn around in the second half but we don't see this happening just yet.

"Malaysia is much better insulated than other countries," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur after opening a dialogue at the Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia yesterday.

Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) showed a 3.2 per cent year-on-year growth for the first quarter, down from 11.7 per cent in the same quarter last year. The country is due to release its GDP figures for the second quarter later this month.

On reports that Washington may impose conditions to a meeting between Dr Mahathir and President George W. Bush on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference in October, the Prime Minister said he is not aware of it.

"I am not aware of this but we certainly made a request. Its normal in such a meeting that leaders meet and it is not a question of requesting or not. If we have the time, we meet. If we don't have the time, we don't meet," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the proposed meeting will depend on whether there exists an opportunity to do so.

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