

KL TO FIGHT U.S. STANCE ON EAEC

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Govt to woo Japan to join caucus despite Washington's opposition

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will plan a strategy to overcome the US opposition to the Asean proposal for an East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC).

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the Government would try to convince Japan to accept Asean's invitation to join the EAEC.

Responding to a question on a *Kyodo* report that the United States had formally informed Japan of its opposition to the EAEC, the Prime Minister said Malaysia had been informed on the matter.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing of two agreements on a waste water treatment system here.

The *Kyodo* report, quoting Japanese and Asean sources, said the US Embassy in Tokyo had conveyed to the Japanese Government on June 7 Washington's opposition to the EAEC proposal, saying the caucus would have a negative effect on the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) forum.

It marks the first time that the Clinton administration, which has taken a wait-and-see attitude on the EAEC, has explicitly opposed the proposal.

The embassy also told Japanese officials that Thailand, which is Asean's current chairman, and Brunei, as the grouping's chairman of the US-Asean dialogue this year, will be informed on Washington's stance.