

Japan PM backs varsity idea

STAR 11 JAN 2002

Mahathir offers Malaysia as venue

PUTRAJAYA: Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has backed the setting up of a university in South-East Asia that will use skilled but unemployed technicians from Japan as lecturers.

And Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who mooted the idea after attending the Asean+1 meeting in Bandar Seri Begawan in N&ember, has offered Malaysia as the venue.

Speaking to newsmen after the two leaders met for about

an hour at the Prime Minister's office here, yesterday, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Koizumi was very interested.

"The Japanese Prime Minister is very keen to take it up, to provide skilled manpower to Asean countries.

"It should not just be for technical training but upgraded to university level and involve areas of technical co-

operation and information technology," he said.

He said the university would be open to students of the 10 members of Asean and other regions.

Syed Hamid said the country maintained strong ties with Japan under its Look East Policy and had "over a thousand" students studying there.

"But it is very expensive. If students could learn from the

Japanese here, it would be beneficial to Malaysia and Japan, in terms of providing the manpower," he said, adding that it would also be more accessible to students from other parts of the region.

Syed Hamid said the meeting had been "very productive" with both leaders discussing bilateral, regional and international issues.

He said Dr Mahathir want-

ed Malaysia to continue to be able to have access under the Japanese government's Yen Loan and Overseas Development Assistance Fund.

He said both leaders agreed on the need to revitalise the economies of the countries.

"They agreed that in order to have an effective relationship, in order to play a role in world trade under the World Trade Organisation, the countries' respective economies must be strong."