

Japanese nod to KL-based secretariat

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TOKYO: Japan has agreed that the secretariat for the Asean + 3 dialogues be based in Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said last night.

The Prime Minister said his Japanese counterpart Junichiro Koizumi supported the idea when they met at the latter's office at Sori Kantei yesterday morning.

Dr Mahathir expressed confidence that the Asean + 3 would eventually become the EAEG he proposed years ago.

"China had expressed support for the EAEG from the very start while South Korea is now very bullish about the Asean + 3 as it was President Kim Dae-jung who proposed that it be set up as a formal group towards EAEG," he told Malaysian reporters late yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said he also raised the matter of the remaining soft loan from Japan, set up to help the then ailing South-East Asian nations during the Asian financial crisis.

The loan was to be for a project to bring water supply from Pahang to Selangor but the funds were withheld after some environmentalists objected to the project.

"The Japanese give serious consideration to what the environmentalists say."

Today, Dr Mahathir will be in Nagasaki for the official naming of the *Puteri Intan Satu*, a Malaysia International Shipping Corporation Bhd's vessel at the Koyagi plant of the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd's shipyard and machinery works.