

# ***US no longer showing opposition to EAEG***

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PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the United States was no longer actively showing its opposition towards the idea of East Asian Economic Grouping (EAEG).

"To date, there is nothing to show that the Bush (US President George W. Bush) administration is against it. His administration had never said that it was against (EAEG)," he said when asked if the EAEG had finally received a nod from the Bush administration after being opposed by President Clinton administration.

Speaking to reporters upon his return from a five-day visit to Japan and South Korea at the Royal Malaysian Air Force Base at Subang near here, Dr Mahathir said the pressure by foreign powers to include certain countries in the formation of the group had eased over time.

Dr Mahathir said Japan and Korea had made a very strong commitment towards the idea although for the time being it would remain as Asean Plus Three (South Korea, Japan and China).

Asked when the proposal to set up the Asean Plus Three Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur would become a reality, Dr Mahathir said: "When all Asean countries agree to it."

At the moment, he said, not all member countries had stated their position on the proposal.

"We need a consensus. We have already made the offer," he added.

He also said Malaysia was impressed with South Korea's way of managing its economy and wanted to learn from the country's success in making a quick recovery from the last economic crisis.

He was especially impressed with South Korea's

ability to repay in full the US\$56bil (RM212.8bil) loan it took from the International Monetary Fund during the economic crisis.

He said Malaysia would also enhance its Look East Policy involving South Korea and would send more students to the country.

South Korea, he said, had many successful industries

including electronics, biotechnology and car manufacturing which were far advanced compared with Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said he also met 16 Malaysian engineers currently involved in designing and constructing Malaysia's third satellite, Medium size Aperture Camera Satellite (Macsat) at a South Korean research institute.