

Dr M urges Singapore, Manila to resolve

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Singapore and the Philippines should try to resolve their current diplomatic rift in the Asean spirit, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

If allowed to go on, the issue could spoil relations between two Asean members, the Prime Minister

said.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on the problem between the two countries, triggered by the hanging of a Filipina maid in Singapore on March 17 for murder.

The Prime Minister said: "In the Asean spirit, we should try to resolve this

issue.

"We should look into the complaints and see what can be done. I don't think we should allow issues like this to sour relationships between us."

Asked whether the issue would adversely affect Asean, the Prime Minister said he did not think it

would affect Asean as a whole.

Asked whether he would like Malaysia to mediate between the two countries, Dr Mahathir said the country had not been invited to take up such a role.

"I think the Asean set-up is sufficient for all kinds of get-togethers to discuss (is-

ues)."

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing ceremony of the statement of vision for the Southeast Asian Telecommunications Community at the Crown Princess Hotel here.

The Filipina maid, Flor Contemplacion, a 42-year-

impasse over maid's hanging

old mother of four, was convicted for the 1991 killing of another Filipina maid and a Singaporean boy.

It was reported that the row was over the refusal by Singapore to delay the hanging pending new evidence to prove her innocence.

In the aftermath of the hanging, Philippines president Fidel Ramos downgraded diplomatic ties with Singapore and ordered a military transport plane to ferry back some 200 maids from Singapore.

The Philippine Government had said that it was counting on Hong Kong,

Malaysia, South Korea and Taiwan to absorb new Filipina domestic maids amid a ban on further deployment to Singapore.

Asked when the general election would be held, the Prime Minister said: "We have plenty of time, the whole of 1995 will be devoted to the election."