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Singapore hopes outstanding issues will be resolved soon

Sreerema Banoo

WITH the Central Limit Order Book International (CLOB) issue out of the way, Singapore is hopeful that remaining outstanding matters between Malaysia and the republic will be settled soon, its High Commissioner to Malaysia, Mr K. Kesavapany, said yesterday.

While the governments on both sides of the Causeway wish to see all outstanding issues resolved, negotiations have reached a deadlock. There was a perception that negotiations had been set aside due to the Umno elections in May. This, however, was refuted by Malaysia, who reiterated that the deadlock had nothing to do with the Umno elections.

"With the CLOB issue settled, we hope to see the resolution of other bilateral issues," Kesavapany told reporters after announcing the Singapore Scholarship Scheme for Asean member countries in Kuala Lumpur.

Outstanding bilateral issues include the sale of water to Singapore, land owned by KTM Bhd in Singapore, intrusions by Singapore Air Force aircraft into Malaysian airspace and Singapore Central Provident Fund withdrawals by Malaysians working in the republic.

The Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange and the Singapore Exchange Ltd had in February agreed to a solution to the CLOB issue which had seen securities with a current worth of RM17 billion frozen since September 1998 following the imposition of selective capital controls by Malaysia.

Asked to comment on Singapore Straits Times columnist Chua Lee Hoong's description of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a "top dog", Kesavapany said "the comment by the Straits Times columnist does not reflect the Singapore Government's views".

He added that the Malaysian High Commission in Singapore had already written to the daily and "that is where the matter is".

Describing relations between the two neighbours as "good", the High Commissioner said the scholarship programme is one way to foster "people-to-people relationships" between the two countries.

The programme sees 30 undergraduate scholarships up for grabs for Asean scholars to study at the National University of Singapore or the Nanyang Technological University in any discipline except medicine and dentistry.

There is no bond attached to the government-to-government scholarship scheme and recipients are expected to return to their countries to work upon graduation.

The programme was mooted by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong at the Asean Summit in December 1998. Under the Singapore Cooperation Programme, S\$12 million (RM1 = S\$0.45) will be set aside annually.

"This is the second year that the scholarship is in operation," he said, noting that as a result of a lack of publicity, there was only one Malaysian recipient last year. He added that about 15 applicants from Malaysia are expected this year.

In Malaysia, the scholarship is open to all STPM or GCE 'A' level holders. Three or four Malaysian students are expected to be offered the Singapore Scholarship this year.

Applications forms can be obtained from the Singapore High Commission at 209, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur (Tel: 03-21616404) or the Training Division, Public Service Department, Block B, Level 2, PSD Complex, Jalan Tun Ismail, 50510 Kuala Lumpur (Tel: 03-2995519). The closing date is April 19.

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