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SMA Council's Dialogue Session with UMP Members on Sunday, 1 Sep 2002, from 2.00 pm to 5.30 pm at the Alumni Auditorium

Opening the dialogue session, Professor Low Cheng Hock, President of SMA, thanked Dr Balaji Sadasivan, Minister of State for Health & Environment, for his presence. Prof Low also thanked Dr Chow Kah Kiong and the other UMP members for making the dialogue session possible.

Prof Low said the dialogue session was for everyone to discuss the issues at hand openly and frankly, and also to explore the available solutions. He urged everyone to work together towards a solution. He further assured UMP members that the SMA Council has taken the matter seriously since it first became aware of the UMP crisis. The various initiatives taken by the SMA Council since then have been highlighted in the letter dated 20 August 2002 to UMP members.

Prof Low referred to the UMP Provisional Liquidator's latest letter dated 21 August, informing that he would not be accepting any more new claims as of 3 May 2002. This letter had been circulated to UMP members earlier.

In another letter, also dated 21 August, the UMP Provisional Liquidator informed SMA that UMP is not processing any renewals since

January 2002, and requested that subscriptions collected since then be refunded.

(Afternote: Subscriptions collected in the month of January 2002 had already been remitted to UMP Australia, while those collected since February 2002 were withheld in Singapore pending confirmation of coverage by UMP. SMA's request for the January 2002 subscriptions to be returned to us for refund to members was unsuccessful. The UMP Provisional Liquidator in his reply dated 6 September, said that the January 2002 subscriptions cannot be returned. As such, we will only be able to refund subscriptions that were collected between February 2002 and April 2002. We will write to members concerned regarding collection of the refund.)

The SMA Council's latest initiatives include its appeal to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August. The matter is receiving their attention.

With regard to taking legal action against UMP, SMA had been advised it cannot do so because it has no legal standing in relation to UMP. Only UMP members can take legal action against UMP, if they wish to. SMA is unable to provide financial support for any legal action that UMP members may wish to

take against UMP, so members must pay for it themselves. However, SMA would provide secretariat support to members where necessary. Prof Low also advised that it is not possible at this point, to know what members could get out of UMP, even if legal action is taken.

With regard to getting back the funds from subscriptions of Singapore UMP members which are still in UMP Australia's account, Prof Low urged members to consider the issue carefully, so as not to jeopardise the interests of fellow colleagues who have ongoing cases for which UMP is still providing legal assistance.

Prof Low reflected that one can never predict what is going to happen in the future. Everyone should still look ahead, and think about what they want in Singapore, in terms of medical indemnity organisations, arbitration and mediation. He urged the medical profession to work together to look for solutions to these issues.

Prof Low also thanked Dr Balaji Sadasivan, Minister of State for Health and Environment, for taking the time to attend the dialogue session, in spite of his busy schedule. He appreciated Dr Balaji's proactive approach and expressed confidence in the latter's leadership. ■



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