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Chipping in with ideas

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SOME Sept 21, an information technology (IT)-driven event will take centre stage on television. 'Virtual Commonwealth' (VC), a conference aimed at testing new ideas and ideals, will be telecast live in the evening.

'VC transcends boundaries of nation states and focuses on the needs of the global community,' says Tham Ah Fun, a policy technologist at MIMOS Bhd. 'It is for the common good of all countries, which also explains its name.'

This will be the second VC programme - the first was held last year on the theme 'Governance Of An Inter-Networked World: Towards A Global Civilised Society.' Details can be found on the web site:

www.virtualcommonwealth.org.my.

While last year's panellists included World Bank vice-president Jean-Michel Severino and the United Nations Conference on Trade & Development secretary-general Rubens Ricupero, VC2 will have world renowned economist Paul Krugman, who will speak via teleconferencing technology. (Krugman will actually be in Kuala Lumpur earlier - Aug 27 - to speak at the Malaysian Business Forecast seminar.)

As a proponent of capital controls, Krugman's presence in VC2 will certainly be interesting to Malaysian viewers. The theme this year is 'East Asian Economic Crisis: The Way Forward' and the speakers are expected to examine the lessons learned and more importantly, the measures that can be taken to ensure sustainable recovery.

'In addition, the panel will explore various feasible interventions to prevent another economic crisis of such magnitude,' says Tham. 'Issues with regard to hedge funds and speculation, the new international financial architecture, the proposed Asian Monetary Fund, and the implications of globalisation and liberalisation will be discussed.' Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also the chairman of the National Information Technology Council (NITC), will deliver the keynote address. Former Securities Commission chairman Datuk Dr Mohd Munir Abdul Majid, also a member of NITC, will be the moderator of the dialogue session.

Martin Khor, a consumer activist who has undertaken extensive research on the East Asian economic crisis, will be a panel speaker.

Attendance at VC2 is by invitation only, limited to 800 seats. But the public is invited to send questions, via e-mail to ahfun@mimos.my or fax 03-9660255.

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