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Talks on economic, political situation

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will attend a dialogue session with prominent economists, businessmen and political leaders to discuss the future business and political scenario in Malaysia. The dialogue will also be attended by a "controversial" economist, Ford International Professor of Economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology Professor Paul Krugman.

At a news conference to announce the event, Strategic Intelligence (M) Sdn Bhd (SIM) president Tan Sri (Dr) Lim Kok Wing said the dialogue will bring together Dr Mahathir and Krugman for the first time in the country. The breakfast dialogue will be held on August 27 in conjunction with Malaysian Business Forecast Seminar, which is organised by SIM.

Lim said while Dr Mahathir speaks his mind on issues that often put him at loggerheads with superpowers and adopts unorthodox measures to protect the country from currency manipulators, Krugman is well-known for its divergent view from the mainstream and an author of more than a dozen books.

Krugman has given an early warning on the Asian crisis before it actually happened and is also known for his support of selective capital control measures taken by Malaysia during the regional currency crisis.

"The dialogue would give opportunity for the invited participants to discuss about Malaysia's future economic and political situation with these two influential figures," he said.

Some 60 experts, representing various fields, including economics, politics and media, will be invited in the one-and-a-half-hour, closed-door dialogue.

This will be followed by the seminar, to be attended by some 300 people, including foreigners.

"The seminar brings together a number of experts, corporate and political leaders who will deliberate on issues that determine the future direction of the Malaysian economic and business environment," he said, adding that participants will also discuss issues pertinent to the present of economic recovery.

There will be two sessions of the seminar. The first session on "Asia In The New Economic Environment" will be chaired by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Krugman will be the main speaker at this session, who will talk on "Managing The Paradigm Shift In Asia's New Economic Environment". The second session, "Prospect For Malaysian Business", will be chaired by Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed.

Other invited speakers on the panels of discussion are former Bank Negara deputy governor and Lin Associates chairman Tan Sri Dr Lin See Yan, Bank Negara Malaysia governor Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman, Datuk Dr Zainal Aznam Yusof, who is a member of the National Economic Action Council working group and Andersen Consulting managing partner Larry Gan. Lim is hopeful that the seminar will bring about useful ideas to expedite the country's economic recovery.

On the newly-established organisation, SIM deputy president Abdul Razak Baginda said it is involved in providing economic and political analysis that are helpful in decision-making for its subscribers such as companies or governments.

The regional organisation works with an extensive network of local

commentators and analysts from a broad range of business, political and academic backgrounds in Asian countries. Currently, Strategic Intelligence is based in Singapore, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur.

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