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Currency woes expected to be raised at CHOGM

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MALAYSIA's concerns on the adverse effects brought about by international currency speculators is expected to be voiced in yet another international forum, the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Chogm) in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who will head the Malaysian delegation to the meeting, has been named as the lead speaker at this year's meeting themed "Trade, Investment and Development - the Road To Commonwealth Prosperity".

This year's Chogm will start with the Senior Officials Meeting on October 23, before the heads of government meeting beginning October 24.

Among those expected to make the Malaysian delegation will include officials from the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Prime Minister's special envoy to the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) Tan Sri Musa Hitam and the executive chairman of Sukom 98 Bhd, General Tan Sri Hashim Mohd Ali.

Briefing reporters on the meeting yesterday, Foreign Ministry secretary general Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad said by virtue of hosting this year's Chogm, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II will speak at the opening ceremony on October 24.

In previous Chogms, although she was usually in attendance, there was no function where the Queen spoke.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair will deliver the welcoming speech, to which the Indian Prime Minister, Inder Kumar Gujral will reply to.

Meanwhile, suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth membership is expected to be discussed when the CMAG presents its findings of the country's state of affairs at the Edinburgh meeting.

Observers expect an extension of Nigeria's suspension as General Sani Abacha's Government's timetable for remedial actions are not in line with that required by the Commonwealth.

In the last Chogm in Auckland two years ago, Nigeria's military government was found to have contravened the Harare Principles which broadly touches governance.

It was allowed two years to return to free elections pending which its membership in the Commonwealth was suspended.

It is understood, however, that Lagos has been actively lobbying for support to return to the Commonwealth.

Meanwhile, Sierra Leone's existing government which was installed through a coup has also been banned from attending the meeting.

Instead, Britain has invited the country's ousted leader, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to attend as a special guest.

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