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Dr M among eight keynote speakers

Joseph Binkasan in London

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be among the world's eight heads of government who will be keynote speakers at the two-day Commonwealth Business Forum here from Oct 22.

The forum, to be held in conjunction with the Oct 24-27 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh, is jointly organised by the British Government, Commonwealth Secretariat and the Financial Times Conferences.

Dr Mahathir's address will be on "Key Issues for Commonwealth in Promoting Trade and Investment" while his Singapore counterpart, Goh Chok Tong, will speak on "Commonwealth Trading Network: Opportunities and Challenges".

An official of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office told foreign journalists on Thursday that about 250 international business leaders from the Commonwealth's 54 members countries would attend the forum.

It features both plenary sessions and interactive workshops and its findings will be submitted to CHOGM to consider this year's theme, "Trade, Investment and Development: The Road to Commonwealth Prosperity."

Other speakers include British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, Barbados Prime Minister Owen Arthur, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Sri Lanka President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Australian Prime Minister John Howard.

The FCO official also said that business leaders and senior members of international financial community from all parts of the Commonwealth will also speak at the forum.

This will be the first such forum organised in conjunction with CHOGM.

The official said the forum would be an important event as it could increase understanding of members' priorities, goals and experiences, and so help build the foundations for better co-operation within the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth accounts for 20 per cent of the world trade.

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