

# Dr M: Commonwealth has important role

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Grouping can help members face challenges of globalisation, says PM

**KUALA LUMPUR, Fri:** The Commonwealth can help its members face the challenges of globalisation and promote policies to close the digital divide between rich and poor countries, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The 54 branches, representing a third of the world's population, should not only promote the spirit of the Commonwealth but also its contents, he added.

It can also ensure that developing countries become full participants in international economic discussions, shaping and influencing the rules and laws of a globalised

world, he said when opening the International Meeting of the Royal Commonwealth Society 2000, held for the first time in Asia, here.

"I believe that the Commonwealth can play an important role in helping its member states mould a new borderless global world.

"It could also work to promote policies that help to close the digital gap between rich and poor countries so that knowledge can truly work towards enriching everyone."

Mahathir said the Commonwealth was no longer a grouping of ex-colonies of the British Empire, but more

a grouping of like-minded countries.

While this is good, the Commonwealth should not be dragged down by the number of members, making it unable to reach mutual consensus.

He said: "To progress, it must continue to review its role and adapt to a fast-changing world. It must also ensure that its members are equipped to handle challenges like globalisation.

"In this respect, the more developed members should assist the developing member countries to build their capacity to deal with a new global environment."

Citing the trail of financial destruction and misery left behind by currency traders, Mahathir said it was time for the vicious system of unregulated and mysterious flow of capital to be outlawed.

"Together, the Commonwealth should insist on playing a meaningful role in world affairs.

"I have faith that if we stay united, it will continue to be significant as a role model of North-South cooperation for mutual benefit," he said.

The four-day meeting includes several plenary and panel sessions, workshops and local tours.