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THE BUSINESS TIMES

Tharman to visit Berlin and Moscow

He will speak at Bergedorf Round Table, co-chair Russia-S'pore IGC

DEPUTY Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam heads to Europe today for a six-day visit that will first take him to Berlin and then Moscow.

In the German capital, Mr Tharman - who is also the Finance and Manpower Minister - has been invited by the Korber Foundation to make a speech at its prestigious Bergedorf Round Table event tomorrow.

According to a statement issued by the Finance Ministry yesterday, Mr Tharman, 54, is scheduled to speak on the theme, 'Rise of New East: Europe and Asia in a New Global Order'.

The Korber Foundation, founded by a German entrepreneur in 1959, helps to promote active citizenry and foster a better understanding of foreign policy issues.

One way which the foundation pursues this agenda is through the Bergedorf Round Table, a confidential, two-day gathering that takes place thrice a year between policy-makers, diplomats and international relations experts. This weekend's session will be the 149th to date, and previous rounds have seen the likes of the late Pope John Paul II and current Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin take part.

This year also marks the Round Table's 50th anniversary, and Mr Tharman will join other high-level guests in the celebrations taking place today, with both German Chancellor Angela Merkel and German President Christian Wulff speaking.

While in Berlin, Mr Tharman will take the chance to meet with German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble and Education & Research Minister Annette Schavan.

Mr Tharman will head to Moscow on Tuesday for the second leg of his trip. While in the Russian capital, he will co-chair the second Russia-Singapore High-Level Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) along with his counterpart, Russian DPM Vyacheslav Volodin.

The IGC was first mooted by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev during his state visit to Singapore two years ago as a signal of intent of the desire of both countries to develop broad-based cooperation across a wide range of sectors.

Singapore hosted the inaugural IGC last September in conjunction with the annual Russia-Singapore Business Forum. That first session was co-chaired by former Russian DPM Sergey Sobyanin and former Singapore senior minister Goh Chok Tong.