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London is world leader in business

BY NICHOLAS CECIL

Political Correspondent

LONDON is beating other English cities in the battle to compete with rival economic centres around the world, according to an authoritative government report.

The State of the English Cities found that urban areas in the North and Midlands are lagging behind the capital and other cities in the South and East of the country, as well as abroad. The 452-page report praises the economic turnaround in many cities since the Eighties, however, it admits that they still cannot challenge many of their rivals in Spain, Germany and France.

It states: "Many, with the notable exception of the global player of London, are not performing as well as their competitors in Europe and beyond."

* Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott and communities minister David Miliband will publish the study today Mr Prescott said: "This report, unprecedented in its scope, shows our cities are very much back in business as successful places to live and work."