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Aussie-Macho

AUSTRALIA TOLD TO ABANDON `MACHO' APPROACH TO ASIA

By: Neville D'Cruz

MELBOURNE, Jan 11 (Bernama) -- Australia has been asked to abandon its ``macho'' approach to relations with Asia, that's based on ``fear and an uncertain sense of identity''.

Writing in ``The Age'' newspaper today, Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne's Department of Management, Dr Howard Dick, said Australia, in its dealings with Asia, should do so ``confidently, sensitively and practically with real people as we find them''.

``Much as been done, and we can take pride in that. If we listen more carefully to our Asian friends, we will find that, on the whole, they like us and we are trying to help develop broader and better relations,'' he said.

``Occasional sledging from the likes of Dr Mahathir (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia) should be taken in good spirit."

``We should be wary of those who encourage us to gaze lovingly at our own fascinating reflection. Proud we may be of our institutions and way of life, but we will only lose by turning our back on our own neighbourhood or barging in like a bunch of rampant teenagers."

``For all its problems, Asia is still the most exciting part of the world and we are lucky to be right next door.''

Dr Dick said Asian countries were not asking that Australia abandon its values and institutions ``but that we negotiate in good faith. In other words, that we be less boastful of the superiority of our own values and institutions."

``It is a demand for mutual respect. A person who parades in society as someone it is a privilege to know, boasts in a loud voice, does not listen, does not adjust and does not learn, is a painful bore."

``This macho Aussie does not need to be indulged. We are all part of the one world, we acknowledge differences, and we sustain relationships.''

Dr Dick said the issue was not whether Australians would develop closer relationships with Asians and Asian countries. ``We have, we are and we will,'' he said.

``Rather it is how we have better relationships, with less friction and more understanding. Being a challenge does not make it too hard."

``Individually, Australians tend to work well with Asian counterparts. We take people as we find them, are resourceful, adaptable and friendly."

``Asian people sometimes tell us that they find Australians better colleagues than more status-conscious Europeans or more aggressive Americans."

``This suggests that the root of the problem is not cultural or political incompatibility, but ideological constructs that get in the way.''

-- BERNAMA

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