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Study-Relations

NEW BOOK OUTLINES AUSTRALIA'S TROUBLED RELATIONS WITH MALAYSIA

By: Neville D'Cruz

MELBOURNE, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- An important study of Australia's relations with Malaysia is the subject of a book recently published in Malaysia by Melbourne academic Rita Camilleri.

The book, "Attitudes and Perceptions in Australia-Malaysia Relations: A Contemporary Profile", is an attempt to trace the relationship between Australia and Malaysia from 1985 to the end of 1999 by examining that relationship through the medium of the Australian Press.

The study also takes into account relations at government level and at the business level and it looks at the role of religious and legal institutions and other elements of civil society.

Topics and issues discussed in the book include the Barlow and Chambers hanging case and the Malaysian judicial system, the row of the "Embassy" television series and the film "Turtle Beach", the Raja Bahrin versus Gillespie case and the role of the media in Malaysia and Australia.

Camilleri, who will attend the Malaysian Masculinities at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia) from Nov 2 to 5, said that during the 1980s and 1990s, the Australian governments actively pursued a policy of engagement with Asia.

"At the same time, Malaysia under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was moving away from its British connections to forge closer links with other Asian nations," she said.

"Malaysia was seen to assume a leadership role, often critical of Western policies.

"One of the intriguing and important questions is: How was Australia to adapt to this new self-assertiveness? What of its policy engagement?"

The book, which is published by the National University of Malaysia Press, has already received international recognition.

In the foreword, Prof Johan Saravanamuttu of Universiti Sains Malaysia writes: "I have found Rita Camilleri's reading of Australia-Malaysia relations not only self-assured and authoritative but, more importantly, reflexive, balanced and nuanced, accounting for all the complexities of that special relationship."

Adjunct Prof Vin D'Cruz of the Centre for Malaysian Studies, Monash University in Melbourne, describes the book as the "first full-length academic discussion of its kind" portraying relations between Malaysia and Australia.

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