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## Asian values in new world order

ONE of the most lamentable leftovers of European colonisation and domination of Asian countries has to be the ready acquiescence to the notion that "West is best". Despite having descended from some of the earliest civilisations on earth, Asians are somehow up against a psychological barrier when they look at values and systems coming from the West, acceding to them ungrudgingly most of the time.

This easy acceptance has in many ways precluded notions of an Asian dimension to a new world order - never mind the fact that Asia is home to more than two-thirds of mankind and some of today's most vibrant economies. Unfortunately, most people recognise the potential of Asia playing a lead role but are doing nothing about it. And it is even more unfortunate that Asians themselves are not rising to the challenge posed by the few who dare to speak up about it, including Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The first leader to have done so was India's Jawaharlal Nehru more than five decades ago.

The Prime Minister's speech at the 15th anniversary symposium of the Institute for International Policy Studies in Tokyo on Tuesday was yet another forthright reminder to Asians that they had to learn to be more critical of ideas and concepts coming out of the West or they would never play a meaningful role in reshaping a new world order. It is clear that at the moment, ideas, values and systems which have been accepted by the world are of European origin. And the Europeans claim that their values are in fact universal values, while Asian values that go against theirs are either wrong or inferior.

But Asians need to ponder some of the imperfections of Western values and systems, about the failures which had caused them to discard some of their methods and about the harmful ideas in several of their concepts - among them market liberalisation and deregulation. Are these the systems Asians should accede to just because they are Western in origin? Japan, for instance, has had its own formula for success. Perhaps it could play a role in enhancing this formula beyond its borders and help overcome the psychological barrier suffered by the rest of Asia in dealing with Western values.