

HD RESOURCES AND ENERGY, AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS, HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH, TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY AND EDUCATION FIVE GREAT STRENGTH OF AUSTRALIA

WC 1,658 words

PD 17 September 2014

SN Australian Government News

SC HTAUGN

LA English

CY Copyright 2014. HT Media Limited. All rights reserved.

LP

CANBERRA, ACT, Sept. 17 -- Minister for Trade and Investment Andrew Robb issued the following speech:

One of our core principles as a government is to back Australia's strengths.

TD

Those are the things we do as well any and better than most.

Australia's five great strengths are in our view: resources and energy; agriculture and agribusiness; health and medical research, tourism and hospitality and of course education, including international education.

There are also all of the services, logistics and high end-manufacturing which cluster around these sectors.

There is an urgency about this due to the phenomena we are witnessing throughout Asia.

We have all seen the OECD figures which estimate the middle class of the Asia Pacific surging from 600 million to around three billion within 20-30 years.

We are seeing unfold:

A humanitarian miracle. A never to be repeated phenomena. Presenting both huge opportunities and huge challenges. This says it all really about the relevance of why we are here today.

As a proud alumni of La Trobe, having studied economics here, I am well aware that this is a university that has set a gold standard in terms of expertise in Asia.

La Trobe was a first mover in regard to Asian studies in Australia and as I understand is one of only two universities in the country offering all four of the major languages of Asia in Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Hindi.

More than two million people living in Australia speak an Asian language, including almost 700,000 who speak either Mandarin or Cantonese.

So in opening the La Trobe Asia Centre, as an institution, you are well and truly backing your strengths.

As John Dewar told me, the centre is intended to provide the broader community, both in Australia and in the region, with access to La Trobe's deep well of expertise on Asia.

It will also further elevate La Trobe's standing as a most authoritative voice in the public debate about Australia's relations with Asia and our role in this the Asian Century.

Building Australia's understanding of Asia and linkages with it is indeed a critical national task.

Since we came to government we've made Asia the key priority of our approach to economic diplomacy and engagement.

As the prime minister has said our focus is more "Jakarta not Geneva".

In trade and investment we prioritised the conclusion of free trade agreements with the major economies of North Asia.

China, Japan and Korea account for more than 50 per cent of our exports.

We have quickly concluded landmark agreements with Japan and Korea.

And I am pleased to report, that following the 21st round of negotiations with **China** earlier this month, that the conclusion of an agreement remains in prospect this year - but they are tough negotiators and there is still work to do.

Like all relationships, diplomatic relations are built on mutual respect and trust. You get from them what you put in.

In this respect we have placed priority on intensifying our levels of engagement.

For example, following the 2013 election, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and myself quickly visited Indonesia.

This paid almost immediate dividends in terms of helping to repair the damage to our relationship caused by our predecessor's ban on live cattle exports.

This was an example of how greater awareness and cultural understanding by government could have prevented a major problem.

In April I led Australia's biggest ever business delegation to **China** - involving 700 delegates - in conjunction with the Prime Minister's visit.

Australia Week in **China** (AWIC) sent a strong and positive signal to our biggest trading partner of the importance we place in the relationship.

The visit produced almost \$1 **billion** in commercial deals and subsequently we are seeing major multi-**billion**-dollar investment commitments in Australia made as a direct result of the investment roundtables we staged.

In 12 months I have chaired 40 high-level investment roundtables in 16 different countries including many in Asia, involving investors and fund managers representing literally trillion-of-dollars. These are also producing some good results.

What you are doing here at La Trobe will provide contemporary insights to assist all of us with a **stake** in Asia to better understand the geo-politics, the emerging trends and the cultures themselves in this truly dynamic part of the world.

Take India - our fifth biggest export market, yet our two-way trade is worth about \$15 **billion**, 10 times less than that with **China**.

This is a country we are determined to get to know better because India is rapidly emerging.

There is enormous scope to deepen our relationship at so many levels.

Again Australia has so much to offer this huge, young population that needs education, vocational training and jobs.

We have just returned from a successful visit of India with a prime ministerial delegation of 32 CEOs and business leaders in resources, finance, transport, logistics, packaging, education and training.

We announced our **uranium** deal - which can deliver major benefits for Australia in terms of increased exports. It will also help India supply cleaner **energy** for its vast population.

We launched the Indian component of the New Colombo Plan, where young Australians will study in India, as well as across the region, including scholars from La Trobe.

The links created by these types of cultural exchanges are invaluable both for the individuals involved and ultimately for our country.

In January I will **lead** a 300-strong business delegation to India, again it will be the largest ever government delegation to the sub-continent.

I also recently visited Burma, a country of renewed potential, growing stability and strategic importance.

It was once the key food bowl of Asia.

A population of 51 **million** - with a young workforce, keen to take advantage of the new openness and economic promise.

Australia is playing an important role in helping to build capacity.

For example, we are assisting with the development of world-class **mining** regulations and practices.

We are driving the development of a leadership program on technical education and vocational training.

Again, leveraging Australia's strengths.

As the country develops - infrastructure will be critical for driving economic growth and lifting people out of poverty.

Australian **company** Worldpoly, led by CEO Rob Hall, is leading by example on the ground in Myanmar.

Based in Lynbrook, here in Victoria, Worldpoly Pty Ltd has been involved in the polyethylene (PE) pipe and fittings industry for over 50 years.

The **company** now exports PE welding machinery and related equipment to over 100 countries worldwide.

Its major customers include regional water and sewerage authorities, gas companies, major miners including BHP, Rio and Xstrata and pipeline contractors from Chile, Saudi Arabia and Norway to Ghana, New Caledonia and Russia.

In Myanmar, Worldpoly has teamed up with local **company** Authentic Production, which imports Worldpoly pipe-welding equipment for use in civil engineering, construction and **mining**.

Rob Hall is now in the process of establishing the country's first pipe welding school in Rangoon, to train young locals and help develop the skills-base required to build Myanmar's infrastructure literally from the ground up.

Worldpoly's global activities highlight not only the opportunity but also the imperative of Australia's access to all important Global Value Chains, particularly those in Asia.

These are the lucrative supply chains that power production and which rely on inputs from around the world.

The income from trade flows within GVCs has doubled between 1995 and 2009.

For **China** it has increased six-fold and India five-fold.

GVCs are now integral parts of the global economy and will only grow in importance over time and Australia needs to be an increasingly active participant.

Singapore is an example of a highly developed economy where there is strong scope for Australian input into areas such as aviation and aerospace and so-called 'disruptive technologies' like robotics.

Our fifth largest trading partner; Singapore is a country I have already visited on several occasions to open doors for Australian business.

As Australia and Victoria transitions out of automotive manufacturing, Singapore offers a possible market for our expertise and skills in high-value parts and component manufacturing.

Australian services have a particularly important role to play in Asia's economic transformation.

To give you an example, during a week of meetings in **Hong Kong** last year no fewer than 32 separate services, which Australia delivers at the highest standard, were raised with me, all of which are in strong demand in **China**.

Some were raised multiple times.

Banking and financial services, all the trades, architecture and design, engineering, legal services, environmental services, logistics, project management, IT, event management, tourism and hospitality through to healthcare including aged care, secondary and higher education, vocational training - the list goes on.

The increasing provision of services is fundamental to meeting the demands of **China**'s growing middle class. Services will also be a vital source of jobs.

In 2003, the **Chinese** services sector was 40 per cent larger than the whole Australian economy.

Last year, despite Australia's uninterrupted economic growth over that ensuing decade, the **Chinese** services sector was 230 per cent larger than our economy.

It is a similar story in many parts of Asia and emphasises the need for us to know as much as possible about these countries and cultures.

This is why the launch of La Trobe's Asia Centre is so timely.

It is totally compatible with the emphasis the Abbott Government has placed on Asia and is a resource from which we are sure to draw on as we seek to broaden and deepen our engagement.

I wish you every success.

CT For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

NS gdip : International Relations | gpol : Domestic Politics | gcat : Political/General News | gpir : Politics/International Relations

RE auscap : Australian Capital Territory | austr : Australia | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania

PUB HT Media Limited

AN Document HTAUGN0020140917ea9h00107