

Malays need to discover themselves says Rais

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From SAIFULAZHAR ABDULLAH

LONDON, Mon: Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim has reminded young Malays that their failure to understand the Malay agenda could be detrimental to the future of the community.

"Many young Malay professionals do not know what the Malay agenda is and our struggles for the community," he said.

Rais said the young Malays should try and understand Article 153 of the Constitution to find out what the Malay agenda was.

Acknowledging that the Malays were facing a problem of unity, he said it was high time for them to rediscover themselves.

"It is time for us to know where we stand.

"The Malays are just 58 per cent of the population.

"When it comes to education and economy, we are laggards. The only thing that is left is our political

strength," he said at a dialogue with Malaysian students at Imperial College last Friday.

The dialogue, organised by the Malaysian Islamic Study Group and Angkatan Belia Islam UK and Eire, also saw participation from Abim president Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman and Keadilan Youth chief Mohd Ezam Mohd Noor.

The dialogue discussed the future of the country.

Rais also stressed the importance of unity to mend the split between the Malays.

He said he had previously suggested the setting up of a Malay council to enable Malay political parties to sit together to find ways to strengthen Malay unity.

Replying to critical remarks against the country's top leaders, Rais said it was easy to place the blame on people like Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad where administrative weaknesses were concerned.

"We must not forget the many good things Dr Mahathir has done for the country to the extent that some of us here are not brave enough to stand and mention it," he said.

Rais reminded them of the 16 years that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was groomed by Dr Mahathir to the extent he became the envy of the many senior party leaders then.

He said the people had made their judgment in the recent general election and that all should respect that.

"Keadilan has got representatives in Parliament, so use that voice to accomplish your struggles," he added.

Ahmad Azam also raised the issue of globalisation which would marginalise developing countries. He said Abim fully supported Dr Mahathir's efforts in voicing against the repercussions of globalisation.

Ahmad Azam also spoke of the split among the Malays during the recent gen-

eral election.

He said if the problem of Malay unity was left unresolved, it would soon become critical.

Ahmad Azam said if the mood of the Malays towards Umno continued to dwindle, the ruling party would be facing a serious crisis of confidence.

He suggested that the present crisis be solved using political solutions instead of other means.

He was also concerned with the changing leadership trend in Umno where the party's leadership was dominated by corporate people.

"We didn't see much problem when the party was dominated by teachers, academicians and religious leaders," he added.

Mohd Ezam, in his speech, concentrated more on his experience of being arrested and alleged abuses of power in the Government. — NST