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Raja Nazrin: Stick to Constitution

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■ **By Shamini Darshni
and Minderjeet Kaur**
news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Get a copy of the Federal Constitution and read it.

The Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah, in making the call to young Malaysians, said protecting the integrity of the Constitution was every Malaysian's way of promoting national unity.

"The Constitution is the supreme law of the land. It guarantees the rights of every Malaysian. The integrity of that document must be protected at all cost," he said to applause at the first Malaysian Student Leaders Summit 2007 here yesterday.

The Constitution was a cleverly crafted document which clearly provided for adequate checks and balances against excesses through the separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, each protected from encroachment by the other, he said.

"It has often been said that many a misunderstanding may be avoided if principles embodied in the Constitution are adhered to strictly. Upholding the rule of law is paramount," said Raja Nazrin.

In a keynote address greeted by

cheers and nods of agreement, he set forth several points for Malaysians to play their part in nation-building and integration.

The rakyat, he said, should take time to study the nation's history, particularly the lives and works of past leaders, citing Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman as an example.

He called on Malaysians to take personal ownership over the well-being of the country.

"Do not succumb to indifference and apathy. Hold on to your ideals. Do not give way to cynicism and opportunism. Believe that you can make a difference."

Raja Nazrin said Malaysians should be active in community service geared towards promoting interaction between communities.

He also emphasised serving the country to the best of one's abilities, be it in the civil service or staying to preserve or be a part of human capital growth.

On racial integration, Raja Nazrin said interaction between different ethnic groups seemed more of an urban phenomenon.

"In recent years, ethnic identities appear to have become more explicit. In some instances, what divides us has become more emphasised than what unites us."

Malaysians were sadly showing

RAJA DR NAZRIN ON:

Three essentials for sustained nation-building

- The rule of law and the inviolability of the Constitution
- Economic and social justice for all
- Good governance and a thriving civil society

How the public can promote national unity

- Get a copy of the Federal Constitution and familiarise yourself with it
- Study the nation's history, particularly the lives and work of past leaders who have sacrificed much for the country
- Take personal ownership of the well-being of the country and do not succumb to indifference and apathy
- Participate actively in community service geared towards promoting interaction between communities
- Be prepared to serve your country to the best of your ability

signs of polarisation along ethnic and religious lines.

"Some groups bear grudges against what is perceived as preferential treatment. Others regard preferential treatment as their indisputable right."

Matters of faith, he said, were becoming topics of immense con-

troversy. "They promote overzealousness and coercive action, and drive Malaysians further and further away from each other.

"Our diversity was meant to be our unique asset. The Federal Constitution and the Rukun Negara institutionalised living together in peaceful, harmonious

coexistence. Yet 50 years after Merdeka, we are still grappling with concerns about unity."

Raja Nazrin suggested three ways for effective and sustained nation-building — the first is upholding the Constitution.

The second, is economic and social justice.

"The people you work and play with, the friendships you make, must never be constrained by ethnicity. Pre-conceptions, parochialism and chauvinism can be eradicated if we interact actively with others of a different ethnic group or religion, even if it is just one teacher, one policeman or one classmate."

The third, is good governance and a thriving civil society. "Only those who are capable, responsible and scrupulously honest should be allowed to serve in positions of leadership. Those who are inefficient, incompetent and, most importantly, corrupt, should be held in absolute contempt."

It was very important, he added, to have leaders who were earnest in building unity and did not resort to religious or ethnic posturing to further their careers.

Malaysians of all races and religions need to believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have a place under the Malaysian sun.