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# Getting politicians on the unity bandwagon

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**THE** Raja Muda of Perak Raja Dr Nazrin Shah has become a beacon to illuminate the sometimes tortuous and difficult path our country still needs to take before it reaches an enlightened state with respect to national unity and harmony.

national unity and who never resort to religious and ethnic posturing to further their political careers.

"If they fail in this respect, they must be held accountable and answerable before the law," he said.

For all the talk about unity, it is pretty difficult in practice to get practising politicians on the racial unity bandwagon not least because politics in the country and many political parties are divided along the lines of race and religion.

That provides a peculiar difficulty because politicians make their mark by becoming champions of their own race and/or religion. To do that they must not only be but seen to be firm and strong in protecting the interests of their own groups.

Thus it is that public posturing by different political leaders leads to the very opposite result of what they say they want to do in terms of national unity. By championing the rights, perceived or otherwise, of their own particular race and religion, they alienate the others, causing rifts among different sections of the public.

And even when the right thing needs to be said or done, they balk because they do not want to be seen as weak and yielding by their own community. If that happens, the support of their own community for them will weaken. Especially for aspiring politicians who want to take a quick route to the top, extremism brings attention and oftentimes support.

There is no easy solution to the problem, especially when many politicians are not honourable enough to fight fair and square and therefore resort to underhand means to raise their profile and their support among the community they purport to serve.

But as Raja Nazrin reminds us, they have to be held accountable under the law if they incite and if they utter seditious threats. If politicians who use racism and extremism to gain support persist in doing so, let the weight of the law land on them.

At the end of the day that will be the only thing which will discourage such behaviour among politicians who play the race and religion theme to gain support.

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Politicians will do well to heed the advice that he has been freely giving towards achievement of national objectives and how they should behave to gain the respect and support of Malaysians.

Last week, he had stressed on the need of politicians to remain clean and not use their positions to enrich themselves. He said that people without integrity, honesty and morality should be prevented from holding public office.

On Sunday, at a summit of student leaders, he emphasised the importance of having leaders who are earnest in maintaining