

Raja

Nazrin:

Defend

Constitution

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by **Cindy Tham**
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: All Malaysians must defend and promote the integrity of the Federal Constitution, the Raja Muda of Perak said yesterday.

Raja Nazrin Shah put this item at the top of a list of seven things Malaysia has to do to ensure it continues to be successful at nation-building.

He said all Malaysians, regardless of race and religion, have a place in this nation, and

society must recognise that they share a common home and responsibility to build the nation together.

"Malaysians of all races, religions, and geographic locations need to believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have a place under the Malaysian sun," he said.

"Only when each citizen believes he or she has a common home and is working towards a common destiny, will he or she make the sacrifices needed for the long haul."

He said the Federal Constitution, the Rukun Negara and Vision 2020 encapsulated

the rights, hopes and aspirations of the people.

He stressed that the integrity of these documents, especially the Constitution, must be defended and promoted.

Raja Nazrin said this in his keynote address at the Young Malaysians' Roundtable Discussion on National Unity and Development in Malaysia: Prospects and Challenges for Nation Building.

The discussion was organised by the Bar

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Seek solutions, says Raja Nazrin

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Council's National Young Lawyers Committee and Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute's Centre for Public Policy Studies.

The other six items on Raja Nazrin's list are:

» In seeking solutions to problems in nation-building, do not assume away problems.

"Nation-building is required precisely because there are stark differences within society. There will, therefore, be chauvinistic groups in this country, just as there are in others. They will fight the idea of national unity, block social change and try to be politically dominant," he said.

He said the existence of such groups meant that society must be prepared to "negotiate our way through and around these differences".

"We can, for example, create social movements that aim to enlighten and dissuade popular support being given to them."

» Nation-building requires accommodation and compromise.

"In our haste to be prescriptive, we should not be so idealistic that we are incapable of also being practical," Raja Nazrin said.

To seek the best solutions, society should be prepared to "sacrifice some part of our positions for the good of the whole".

» Avoid enforced solutions.

"Nation building is effectively rendered null and void by coercion or the threat of violence. 'Might' cannot and must not be shown to be 'right'. If solutions cannot be found within the political and social structures, there will be temptation to resort to illegitimate ways and means."

» Be open, tolerant and forward-looking

"Only by being inclusive and participative can the various sectors of our society be productively engaged. It follows that all forms of extremism, chauvinism, racism and isolationism must be guarded against. They must be soundly sanctioned socially, politically and, if necessary, also legally," he said.

» Nation-building is a process, not an outcome

It takes time and persistence to build a nation. "Where there is no trust, trust has to be built. Where there is no cooperative network, one has to be established. Building on layers of foundation is the only way to ensure the process is solid and sustainable," Raja Nazrin said.

» Political, social and economic incentives must reward good behaviour, penalise bad.

"The incentives for building up a nation must be greater and more compelling than breaking it down. The price of racial and cultural intolerance must be made prohibitively high," he said.