

# Building a united nation

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**THE** keynote address given by the Raja Muda of Perak at a roundtable discussion on national unity on Tuesday deserves to be paid close attention by all Malaysians. The concerns that it pinpoints reflect an extremely important agenda for nation-building and show the way for our multi-

cultural society to flourish.

Conversely, if we do not wake up to its message now, the fault lines that have become apparent in our society today could get worse, and if not corrected, may bring us to a fate no one would like to ponder.

It is highly significant that

Raja Nazrin Shah has chosen to unequivocally emphasise the supremacy of the Federal Constitution because this foundation of our nation is the only viable covenant that is workable in our polyglot situation.

Secondly, Raja Nazrin has rightly called on all Malaysians

to defend the federal charter. Indeed, the current uncomfortable position in our inter-communal relations is partly due to the silence of many good people in the face of injustices big and small that have cast a shadow on our national life.

The central point in Raja Nazrin's address, that all Malaysians, regardless of race and religion, have a place in this nation, and that society must recognise that they share a common home and responsibility to build the nation together, may seem to be a self-evident premise of our nationhood. However, all Malaysians who have been struck at the aberrations in our collective experience - whether in public affairs, politics, development, socio-cultural and human rights, justice or otherwise - know that we have strayed from this vision in our journey together.

There are seven major points in Raja Nazrin's address that make a sound prescription for a progressive, cohesive society

They reflect a universally acceptable ethos that can ensure a respectable position for our nation on the world stage. To make these ideas accessible to all our readers, his speech is reproduced in full on pages 18 and 19.

Although the sharing of opportunities needs to be sensitively handled so that all segments of society benefit, in reality, there have been many misses and abuses that indicate a breakdown in responsibility and accountability. These anomalies must stop if we care about the future of our nation.

It is important to recognise that each wrong that goes uncorrected adds to the burden of grievances that undermines the fabric of social cohesion. Every Malaysian has a stake in ensuring that the damage that has been done is repaired. The only way we should go forward is to ensure that the inalienable rights of all individuals are carefully nurtured. It's the least we can do for our nation.