

Praise for Raja Nazrin's speech

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Raja Muda of Perak Raja Dr Nazrin Shah received praise yesterday for his reassurance that the country belongs to all Malaysians.

Various groups were happy that he stressed the importance of defending the integrity of the Federal Constitution.

Raja Nazrin, in his keynote address on "Prospects and Challenges for Nation-building" at the Young Malaysians' Roundtable Discussion on National Unity and Development in Malaysia on Tuesday, had outlined seven steps towards building a strong nation.

Penang Gerakan Wanita publicity bureau chairman Geeta Suresh Chand said there was a desperate need for the younger generation to start thinking along these "golden lines".

"Malaysians must accept that each person, regardless of race and religion, has a place in the country.

"We support Raja Nazrin's views as he has always put forth the need for a united society and the fact that this country belongs to all of us ir-

respective of race, religion and policies," she said in a statement.

Retired Federal Court judge Datuk Abdul Kadir Sulaiman said: "The Federal Constitution was a product of leaders from the three major races who fought for independence from the British. The Constitution is a social contract among the races which must be upheld."

He added that the supreme law of the land provided for equality to all Malaysians, except for certain privileges to the Bumiputeras.

The reminder by Raja Nazrin, he added, was timely for youngsters as the nation celebrated 50 years of independence.

Suhakam commissioner Datuk N. Sivasubramaniam said a united nation was essential to ensure progress and economic growth.

"We should work hard and build this nation. If we quarrel and are divided, all the efforts by the government will be unsuccessful."

The Malay Businessmen and Industrialists Association president Datuk Moehamad Izat Emir said integration was the way to go.

"However, we face a serious

problem with language. In Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, the people speak their national language fluently. But, here, even after 50 years of independence, there is still a large number of Malaysians who cannot speak the national language. The language barrier between the races is a problem which needs to be solved if we want to build a unified nation."

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Social Linguistics and International Communications lecturer Professor Saran Kaur Gill suggested that a language and cultural policy plan be developed.

"It is important to remember that we have to operate on three levels — international, national and ethnic identity — in our everyday life. All three need to operate simultaneously and smoothly in building the nation.

"Therefore, the concerns of each ethnic group need to be taken care of. They need to feel secure," she said.

The Catholic Lawyers of the Diocese of Penang chairman Bernard Bhar, in a statement, urged the government and the judiciary to ensure that the constitutional rights of every citizen were protected.