

Maintain unity, says Sultan

'Be rational when talking about sensitive issues'

By SYLVIA LOOI
sylvia@thestar.com.my

KUALA KANGSAR: Discussions with an open heart and rational thinking in a civilised forum should be the outlet to solve any bickering.

The Sultan of Perak, Sultan Azlan Shah, said the way out especially in discussing sensitive issues concerning religion and race would not be found if there were parties who chose confrontational means.

"No one will win if one chooses the confrontational means to solve sensitive issues," he said at the investiture ceremony to mark his 79th birthday at the Balairong Seri in Istana Iskandariah, Bukit Chandan, here, yesterday.

Calling on the spirit of unity to be strengthened and maintained, the Sultan said failure to maintain unity

would lead to the destruction of the harmonious relationship currently enjoyed by the people of different races and religions in the country.

The Sultan also urged the people to appreciate the peace enjoyed in the country and refrain from actions or words that would cause an open fight.

Earlier in his speech, Perak Raja Muda Raja Dr Nazrin Shah warned that the country was being tested with development that could threaten the people's unity.

He also said that the responsibility of maintaining peace should not be taken lightly.

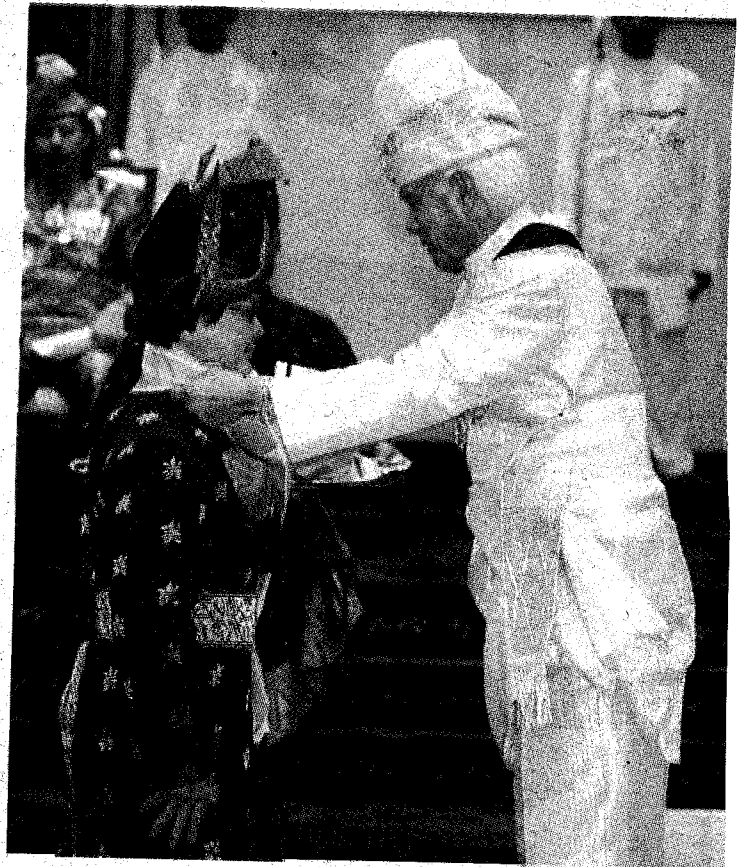
"The country should not compromise or be slow in taking action over things that will cause conflict, which will affect peace," he said, adding that he would be involved actively in dialogues and forums to remind the peo-

ple of the dangers of interpreting religious and racial issues in a narrow and sensational manner.

In his allegiance and congratulatory speech to mark Sultan Azlan Shah's birthday celebration, Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Mohd Tajol Rosli Ghazali said the state's economy performed better last year than in 2005.

Heading the list of 886 recipients this year is Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan, who received the Darjah Seri Paduka Cura Si Manja Kini (SPCM), which carries the "Datuk Seri" title.

Yesterday, 57 people received their awards. Among them were the Navy chief Laksamana Datuk Ramlan Mohamed Ali and Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Azalina Othman Said, who both received the "Datuk Seri" titles.



Royal award: Former national hockey player Poon Fook Loke receiving his Datuk Paduka title from Sultan Azlan Shah at the investiture ceremony at Istana Iskandariah, Bukit Chandan, Kuala Kangsar, yesterday. - Bernama