

All-round backing for Raja Nazrin's views

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Raja Muda of Perak's statements on national unity have been described as a "wonderful injection of fresh air" which should be strongly supported by the public.

Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam, chairman of the Centre of Public Policy Studies of the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli), said the statements from Raja Dr Nazrin Shah were positive and constructive.

Navaratnam, who is also a member of the National Unity Panel, said the country could not afford to let the "silent majority", as Raja Nazrin put it, be hijacked by those with a narrow, extremist view.

"If possible, legal action should be taken against those who go against national unity. There is not much point in criticising them without making them accountable.

"Raja Nazrin has said that hav-

ing a dominant race does not guarantee unity. This is the heart of the problem preventing us from achieving national unity.

"No race or religion should feel they are dominant. Neither should they want to override the other races and religions.

"Malaysia is a country for all races and religions. There should be a place for all under the Malaysian sun. Without this, national unity will remain only an illusion," he said.

Navaratnam said everyone, especially politicians, had a role in ensuring national unity. Sadly, he added, in recent times some politicians allowed racism and religious bigotry to "show its ugly head".

Professor Emeritus Datuk Khoo Kay Kim also shared Raja Nazrin's views and agreed that the silent majority should not allow the country's unity to be annexed by anyone.

However, he felt that the silent majority did not understand what was going on and when this hap-

pened, they tended to look only after themselves.

Khoo said it was not enough to merely identify the problem but urged everyone to act by finding the appropriate solutions. He believed that the ultimate antidote to cure polarisation and disunity was to completely overhaul the country's education system by making it more dynamic.

"The current system is neglecting the cultural aspect of education, stressing too much on science and technology. Malaysia's greatest strength is its cultural diversity.

"We should be leading the world in terms of cultural diversity," he said.

Khoo warned that if Malaysia's education system continued to be examination-oriented, the country would lag behind in 10 years time compared with neighbouring countries like Thailand and Indonesia.

For Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Sha-

habudin, her position in the university had given her the platform to instil the importance of unity in the students, who are the country's future leaders.

"My job is made easy as the student leaders themselves have singled out unity as what they want to work on.

"I truly welcome the idea, and we will be putting down plans to execute this to the masses soon."

Sharifah Hapsah believed that national unity could be boosted through a common goal.

She wanted her students' education to be a total experience of sharing.

"I want them to work together. I want them to play together. I want them to celebrate together. I want them to cry together when they face failures. Education is more than about being theoretical."

She believed that national unity could be attained once the people, especially university students, were aware of its importance and made conscious efforts towards it.