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`Political reality cannot be ignored'

IPOH, Mon. - Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali said today political reality must be taken into account if a non-Malay is nominated to become the Prime Minister of the country.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had only stated the possibility of a non-Malay leading the country in the future because the Federal Constitution was silent on the matter.

"The Constitution is the supreme law of the land and we have to uphold it. However, traditions and culture must be taken into account."

He said this after opening a dialogue and forum on the role of the private sector in curbing corruption.

"You cannot take the Constitution and interpret it without referring to the background, traditions and culture of a country.

"We do not want our country to follow others," he said.

In Kangar, Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the Malays should view Dr Mahathir's statement as a reminder on the importance for them to remain united.

He said the statement reflected the reality of the country's democratic practices where anyone who had the support of the people might become a leader.

"But the reality of the present geo-political system may not enable this to happen yet as it has been accepted throughout the 43 years of independence that a Prime Minister must come from the major party of the ruling coalition."

Muhyiddin was speaking to reporters after attending a meeting with Umno members at Dewan Residensi today.

He said the Malays should be "jolted" by the fact that if they were to split under different political affiliations, the consequence would be the loss of the ability to lead the country.

"There are no two ways about it; the Malays must stay under one banner, that is Umno, in order to remain as the strongest political force in the country."

Muhyiddin said another way a non-Malay might one day become Prime Minister was if the country's social structure had been fully integrated.

"When this is going to happen is another question. It may be 10, 50 or even 100 years."

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