

President should address concerns of Singaporeans: Dr Tony Tan

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Presidential hopeful and former deputy prime minister Dr Tony Tan says candidates in the presidential election on 27 August should run for the office that exists, not for the one they wish to have.

He said one can, of course, imagine very different roles for the President that would require a constitutional amendment.

But the Presidential Election itself is the wrong forum for this.

Dr Tan, who made these points in a statement on Wednesday, said many people have pressed him for his thoughts on this issue.

He said his understanding of the role is that the President is not - and should not be - a separate power centre.

But the President can have influence.

Dr Tan said the President can - and should - address the concerns of Singaporeans and take them into account when exercising his or her powers.

He said these concerns can also be raised formally or informally through appropriate channels.

The choice of channels to pursue depends on the individual situation.

Dr Tan said the President must have a heart for all Singaporeans and must know how to reflect these concerns effectively in the context of national and international affairs.

Dr Tan said he attended the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Forum on the Elected Presidency last Friday.

He said both the presentations by Law and Foreign Affairs Minister K Shanmugam, Professors Tommy Koh and Thio Li-Ann, as well as the questions from the floor, provided much food for thought.

He added that the ongoing debate has certainly set many thinking seriously about the role of the highest office in Singapore.