

Don't be Mahathir clone, Kit Siang urges Pak Lah

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KUALA LUMPUR: Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang urged Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday not to be a clone of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad by resorting to authoritarian methods to deal with political differences.

Lim said in a statement the country's ability to deal with the ongoing spat between Mahathir and the current government will be a test of Malaysia's democracy and nation building and Abdullah must dare to demonstrate his difference from the Mahathir administration.

'Abdullah must dismiss all possibility that the old Mahathirish methods of dealing with differences, particularly the abuse of arbitrary powers like the invocation of the Internal Security Act such as the Operation Lalang mass arrests in 1987, could ever happen under his premiership," Lim said.

"In fact, Mahathir's spat with Abdullah has served to focus on what will be Abdullah's legacy as the fifth prime minister - whether to deliver his reform pledge in the 2004 general election to create a clean, incorruptible, efficient, accountable, transparent, democratic and just administration or just be a clone of the previous Mahathir premiership."

He said the legitimate questions raised by Mahathir must be answered, if not by Abdullah himself, then by the government.

Lim added that public differences between a former prime minister and the incumbent prime minister are not unprecedented in Malaysia.

He said there had been differences between the first and third prime ministers - Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Hussein Onn - and with Mahathir as the fourth.