

Chance for PM to convince the people: Director

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PETALING JAYA: The public might begin to question Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's administration following his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's no-holds-barred criticism of him, Ibrahim Suffian, programme director of the Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research, said yesterday.

"If the remarks by Mahathir are clearly publicised in the media, this will increase the possibility of people questioning the current administration," he said.

Suffian said the former prime minister, seen to have contributed a lot to the development of the country, is still well-respected at many levels of society.

"Regardless of how they had voted for Abdullah, or even if they support the opposition, when Mahathir questions Abdullah, this will make people question Abdullah as well," he said.

The public will also be drawn to focus on how Abdullah would carry out all the promises he made, Suffian observed.

"This will put pressure on him. But this will also be a good opportunity for him to convince the people that he is a good leader," he said.

He said the public should only judge the quality of a leader by looking beyond personality.

"The more important thing to judge of leaders is to look at the policies carried out by them and the quality of these policies," he said.

He noted that the open rift between the two politicians also opened up an opportunity for the public to understand how the government worked.

"They (the public) should welcome [the discussions generated by recent developments between the two politicians]. More than one opinion should be heard," he said.

Referring to focus group research and opinion polls conducted by Merdeka Centre, he said some of the results showed that the respondents tended to think that Mahathir and Abdullah each had his own strengths.

"Mahathir is highly regarded for having strong leadership and technical ability. Abdullah is seen as more approachable," he said.