

**Suspend Zahid Hamidi till assault case cleared, PM told
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 2 – Datuk Seri Najib Razak was today challenged to temporarily remove from his Cabinet Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi – who has been sued for assault – to prove he is serious about government reform.

Opposition lawmaker Gobind Singh Deo (picture) told the prime minister that it is “improper” to put a man who has been ordered to answer a civil suit for assault in charge of the powerful home ministry where his actions and conduct could invite conflict, which would reflect on his Barisan Nasional (BN) government.

“[Leading] the Home Ministry now, which is responsible for the police would to my mind, put Zahid in a position of conflict.

“The Home Ministry is one of the most powerful ministries, with significant influence over various bodies including the police and prisons,” the Puchong MP said, adding in his statement that its minister must be seen as one who is “above and beyond these agencies as he needs to maintain independence”.

Gobind reminded Najib that the PM had promised to raise the quality of governance after winning reelection in the May 5 polls and must therefore show he is committed to carrying out his transformation.

“Will the Prime Minister remove him pending the outcome of the trial or will he resort to the same old indifferent attitude and silence proving yet again that he is incapable of the change he promises?” the DAP man asked.

Ahmad Zahid had been sued by businessman Amir Abdullah Bazli for allegedly punching him in the on January 16, 2006 at the Country Heights recreational club in Kajang, Selangor causing the latter to suffer a nasal bone fracture and a swollen left eye.

Then a deputy information minister, Ahmad Zahid had denied the allegation and applied to the Kuala Lumpur High Court for the case to be thrown out. The application was dismissed by the same court on April 21, 2010.

He later filed a countersuit against the 41-year-old, claiming to have suffered humiliation and emotional trauma as a result of the accusation.

But last year, a three-judge panel of the Court of Appeal unanimously ruled against Zahid’s bid to strike out the assault suit and ordered the minister to pay RM5,000 in costs. It also ordered Zahid to respond to the action.

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