

Kit Siang: Why has Zahid not faced 'criminal' charges?
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 6 — New Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi may be a "criminal", Lim Kit Siang suggested today, reminding Malaysians that the Umno leader had yet to clear his name against allegations of assault in 2006.

The DAP adviser agreed with Puchong MP Gobind Singh Deo who said last week that it was improper to place Zahid in a position where he has great influence over enforcement bodies like the police and prisons when the latter still had such charges hanging over him.

"A response from Najib to Gobind's query is in order," Lim said in a statement, referring to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, "... especially as he is the first prime minister to specifically appoint a minister in the Prime Minister's Department to be specifically responsible for integrity and good governance."

Former Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) president Datuk Paul Low was recently appointed to Najib's Cabinet and placed in charge of corruption and integrity.

"Paul Low... should also declare whether he agrees that Zahid should stand down as home minister until he has fully cleared himself of the serious charges of assault going back to January 2006 when he was deputy information minister," Lim said.

Zahid was sued by businessman Amir Abdullah Bazli for allegedly punching him 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, 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 Amir, 41, claiming to have suffered humiliation and emotional trauma as a result of the accusation.

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

Lim noted that despite the civil suit, Zahid had not been hauled to court by the police and slapped with criminal assault charges.

He asked if Najib had been aware of the allegations against Zahid when he appointed the latter to his Cabinet, and whether he had inquired why the police had not charged him with assault.

"The case raises the pertinent question why Zahid had not been charged by the police for the criminal offence of assault.

"This raises the further question whether Malaysia has a criminal as the new home minister," Lim said.

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