

Zaid: Fight fake news with facts, not special committees
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Fake news can be combated by becoming more knowledgeable, said former minister Zaid Ibrahim.

“The greatest problem in this country, besides kleptocracy, is the fake news.

“And to be able to distinguish between what’s real and what’s fake, you have to know more about everything.

“To know more, you have to read, to write, be brave to let your views known. That’s the way to counter (fake news).

“Not by having a committee on fake news,” Zaid said at the launch of his book “The ZaidGeist,” a collection of his writings on his similarly titled blog over the last eight years, at his house in Petaling Jaya today.

The government had announced last week the formation of a [special committee](#) study legislative measures to curb the spread of fake news in the country.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Azalina Othman Said, who chairs the committee, said a proposed draft law against fake news will be [tabled](#) to cabinet in the near future, and thereafter put to a vote in Parliament.

But as Zaid explained, that the more people know, the less they will be able to be fooled by fake news, precluding the need for such a committee.

‘Like telling apart fake leather’

He gave the example of differentiating between fake and genuine leather products.

“To know the difference between fake and genuine leather, you have to know about the tanning process, how hides are collected and treated, you have to know a lot about leather-making.

“It is the same with the government. You have to know the real situation, and it is becoming increasingly difficult.

“Because people are paid to disseminate false news, and it is very difficult sometimes to tell,” he said.

Another example he cited was Bank Negara governor Muhammad Ibrahim (*photo*) saying that they [approached](#) the government over the RM2 billion purchase of a 22.5ha plot of land, rather than being requested to do so.

Zaid expressed his surprise at this, since he was under the assumption that the government could just give land to Bank Negara if it wanted to.

“But because I don’t know enough about Bank Negara, I’m subject to all this, which one is fake, which one is real?”

“And therefore, it is important that we know more about this subject. Looks like I will have to investigate further,” he said.

He urged people to become active citizens by writing and speaking up, and said the maelstrom of fake news can only be overcome by knowledge and facts.

“We can be entitled to our own opinions, but we cannot be entitled to our own facts,” he said.

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