

Zaid: BN leaders 'cowards', independent media council needed
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 16 — Datuk Zaid Ibrahim accused leaders of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) of being "cowards" for not having an independent media council to regulate the media.

The former de facto law minister cited Umno-controlled media such as TV3 and Utusan Malaysia as the worst offenders of industry standards, with "vile and inaccurate reporting" on opposition politicians.

The Kita president added that "legal action is not a feasible option" to counter the daily "incessant lies", and instead pointed to "independent media council" as a remedy.

But he said that "in our country, such a council is non-existent because our leaders are political cowards."

Zaid also said that BN leaders "dare not allow opposing views to be heard" or "engage in debates on their television or radio stations about important issues."

Today, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said in Parliament that the new law replacing the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA) will include provisions for the formation of a "Media Council" that will allow the media industry to be "self regulatory".

Last year, the government's plan for a media consultative council was snubbed by media chiefs over concerns of further restrictions on press freedom and doubts over the council's independence.

The proposed media council was to be co-chaired by the Information, Communication and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Rais Yatim and Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, while also including other representatives from the government.

Its members included representatives from the government, print, electronic and new media organisations and selected non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Alternative online news portals such as The Malaysian Insider, Malaysiakini, Free Malaysia Today, Malaysia Today and Merdeka Review were not invited, although they are accredited with the Information Department.

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