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Pas organ must face the music

THE bit of stress that currently afflicts people behind Harakah is wholly understandable.

It has been guilty of calculated inertia about its status in the past. That is precisely why Harakah is now saddled with its present woes with the long arm of the law after it as evidenced by the warnings fired off by the Government.

Subtly, it held the Government to political ransom. We savage you endlessly, but you will be hurt more if you try to stop us - that seems to be the publication's mission all along.

In the business sense, and Harakah is indeed a business entity, it has ignored the biggest poser staring on its face, which is simply to decide what it wants to be. It is a curious publication and is neither a newsletter nor a newspaper.

Yes, it has an undeniably strong commercial sense about it - it sells at RM1.30 a copy and also peddles advertising space. Pas probably wanted its status to remain vague to be most effective.

The truth is with circulation reportedly improving, Harakah's strategy is working wonders. It got systematically and progressively bolder with headlines approaching blood-curdling proportions. Why? That Pas-Harakah desperately wished it would be banned is a possibility.

Harakah knows vividly that it is not God's gift to journalism. But it is also perfectly aware that a decisive government action will bolster the anti-establishment tendencies, that the Government is unwilling to accommodate a newspaper that provides what it feels to be alternative views.

Alternative views? Not when its front-page headline reads: "Mahathir Makin Angkuh (Mahathir Becomes More Arrogant)" and a blurb on a statement by the Deputy Menteri Besar of Kelantan who warned a certain newspaper not to become the mouthpiece of the devil.

Pas-Harakah had nonchalantly taken many for a ride, enjoying the best of both worlds. It blissfully need not adhere to journalistic standards and yet masquerades as a newspaper, fuelling support for Pas and making some money in the process. Wondrous!

Harakah has no time for the liberals, beyond some window-dressing. Harakah champions the struggles of Pas, period. The so-called liberated souls who frequent the watering holes of the city are not the part of Pas' constituency.

Harakah unabashedly plays on sentiments and its survival depends on it. It relentlessly and ruthlessly targets top government leaders, especially the Prime Minister. Which does not certainly fall into the category of alternative news.

Neither has Harakah applied for proper permits including a daily licence. The harsh reality that Harakah chose not to grapple with is this: Harakah fears its demise if it operates as any normal respectable daily newspaper.

For starters, it will have to go easy on rhetoric and articles that are pure propaganda in order to survive. Readers cannot stomach articles on how brilliant Pas is day in, day out. Two, it will be judged by the same journalistic standards as the rest, which means Harakah will get a massive black eye.

Newspaper transcends politics. It is painstakingly put together by

hundreds of professional staffers. Every single line has to be defensible - you never know when the lawyer will call. Harakah, on the other hand, adopts a gung-ho approach - sue me if you dare.

Newspapers bring to your breakfast table the breaking news, public opinion, trends, happenings in the entertainment industry and world of style, cuisine, gardening, world news, the latest football results. It is about joy and tragedy in the same page.

There are spells when newspapers go without any domestic political news or features. Harakah, on the contrary, has one objective, that is to bring down the Government.

Harakah cannot thus pretend not to acknowledge that the Government has built a compelling case against it.

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