



**Malaysiakini sues  
gov't over publishing  
knockback  
Malaysiakini.com  
September 29, 2010**

Malaysiakini has  
launched a legal  
challenge after  
authorities rejected its  
application for a permit

has over the past  
leading source of  
Southeast Asian nation,

to publish a newspaper.

The pioneering website  
decade become a  
information in the  
where major newspapers and broadcasters are largely government-linked.

*Malaysiakini* - which focuses on politics, corruption and social issues - filed a case in the High Court today, challenging the Home Ministry's decision to reject its request.

"I don't see why we shouldn't be allowed to publish a newspaper," its chief executive Premesh Chandran (*right*) told *AFP*.

"It's a constitutional right and *Malaysiakini* has been around for 10 years, we have a proven track record for being independent, balanced and credible."

All newspapers in Malaysia need a permit which must be renewed annually.

The licensing system allows the government to close media outlets at will and puts publishers under pressure to toe the line.

*Malaysiakini* and other online media have remained relatively free - despite occasional raids, bans and government criticism - due to a government pledge not to censor the Internet, made in the mid-90s to attract foreign investment.

Chandran said *Malaysiakini*, which has 1.8 million readers per month, wants to launch a newspaper to reach out to a wider audience. Its online portal's operation is not affected by the ministry's decision.

"This is a sign that there is no change (by the government). This is a continuation of policy to have strict control over the print and broadcast media," he said.

No reasons given for rejection

Prime Minister Najib Razak took office last year with promises to promote openness and transparency, but has since faced claims that his administration is trying to silence critics.

Home Ministry officials could not be reached for comment but said in a letter to *Malaysiakini* dated August 19 that "the ministry has decided not to consider" the permit application. No reasons were given.

A media watchdog, the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), criticised the decision as a violation of media freedom and said the licensing laws are open to abuse.

"It's a lot of power to give to one person and there is no accountability because the minister has absolute discretion and does not need to provide any reason to grant or deny a permit," CIJ executive officer Masjaliza Hamzah said.

"It points to a larger picture where the government is asserting its control on freedom of expression in Malaysia," she added.

Masjaliza cited recent cases including the detention of a cartoonist hours before the release of his new book which lampooned the government, and opposition media's difficulties in renewing their permits.

- AFP

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/143971>