

Why can't Kalang push ahead on its own?

COMMENT: By Sorariba Nash

WHEN something goes wrong, attracts a lot of attention and raises concern, we're quick off the mark to ask: what happened? How did this happen to Radio Kalang and why did it happen the way it has? Most of all — who is to blame?

In Radio Kalang's case we cannot blame the government for lack of funding support. Kalang is an entirely independent business entity and should have been generating revenue with an annual expenditure budget of its own. Most importantly of all it should have survived in the business world.

One of the major objectives of establishing Radio Kalang was for it to operate as the commercial arm for the National Broadcasting Commission and help the mother station fund its operational costs. However, this has not been the case. Radio Kalang has become a liability to the NBC. Kalang would have closed without NBC backing.

Apart from allegedly owing money to business houses like MBF Finance and Chin H Min, Kalang is alleged to owe a lot of money to NBC's news service department. NBC has kindly housed the ailing business arm and given general support despite its troubled years.

Quite often, the fault lies within — even if it is really from the outside, it is wise to start from within to put the house in order. In this day of aggressive competition, the NBC should have started cleaning up from inside ages ago.

Even Kalang's top management is a shaped like a mushroom — with highly paid executives sitting on a skinny frame, struggling to uphold their fat salaries and pay for their sporty model cars which attend to more personnel task than business.

Kalang could have initiated such moves and instilled discipline as the business entity, looking for ways to reduce the salary bill. It could have taken a hard look at the word "redundancy".

NBC is still reluctant to examine this word and therefore its salary bill is absorbing most of the budget. Radio Kalang is burdened with this problem, a rub off from the mother organisation from the past.

We are aware that the MBF Finance has repossessed a fleet of cars

RADIO KALANG

from Radio Kalang, CHM has stopped producing Kalang music cassettes, and apart from other business houses severing its business relationship with Kalang because of non payment of bills — what happens if NBC newsroom stops supplying news for the ‘on the hour every hour’ service?

For several years Kalang has enjoyed a monopoly in the radio advertising market, but failed to capitalise on its domination and make money.

What was the problem? Did they fail to create incentives? Try out new ideas? Did they run out of creativity? Lose a sense of direction or was it lack of foresight? Well, what really happened? The public deserves to know.

Even with the pressure of ‘hard times’, NauFM is pushing ahead on its own without support. Why can’t Radio Kalang do the same?

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stations and an expectation that the new radio should be similar to existing stations. One listener, who did not want to be named, said: ‘NauFM is so fancy in its broadcasting and its music is more for the whitemen.’

Too fast: The audience could hardly hear or comprehend what was said in the advertisements because staff working at NauFM were young and mixed-race who speak too fast, the listener added. An 18-year-old man said NauFM played only rock music.

‘How about playing more local music clips?’ he asked. ‘Why can’t NauFM produce a variety of programs which could attract and interest the listeners?’

Meanwhile, an alleged debt of K1.1 million has left the rival FM station, Radio Kalang, the commercial arm of NBC, in a precarious position over its future. At present, Kalang FM is still on air but debts could rise.

Kalang fans’ confusion rankles as NauFM forges further ahead.

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