

Opposition politicians mentioned by Amsterdam & Peroff

JB Jeyaretnam

1. The Paper states that “despite the Privy Council’s dictum, Jeyaretnam remained barred from standing for election until 1997”. This is misleading, as the subject matter under appeal in the Privy Council was not Mr Jeyaretnam’s criminal conviction which resulted in his being barred from standing for election in 1997.

2. The Paper further implied that Mr Jeyaretnam was made a bankrupt by a series of politically-motivated charges and fines. This is untrue. Mr Jeyaretnam’s bankruptcy in 2001 had nothing to do with the Government. It arose from a defamation action brought against Mr Jeyaretnam by the Organising Committee for the 1995 Tamil Language Week, the majority of whom were not politicians. They had argued that Mr Jeyaretnam had committed a very serious libel when he alleged that the Committee was seeking political gains by “nakedly prostituting itself”.

3. Mr Jeyaretnam refused to withdraw or apologise when sued. The court found against him and ordered him to pay damages, but he was unable to pay. Mr Jeyaretnam also had other outstanding debts. Arising from the bankruptcy, Mr Jeyaretnam’s expulsion from Parliament followed due process as provided for under Article 46(2) of the Singapore Constitution. As a bankrupt, Mr Jeyaretnam would have been disqualified from practicing as a solicitor; however, he had not renewed his practicing certificate and had ceased to practise law at the point of his bankruptcy.

4. The allegation that in 1984, Senior District Judge Michael Khoo was rotated from his post after he acquitted opposition leader Mr J B Jeyaretnam on some counts of misuse of party funds is again false. A Commission of Inquiry, chaired by a Supreme Court Judge, exhaustively investigated the

matter, and found no evidence of impropriety or wrong-doing. The Paper is recycling an event which occurred in 1986, more than 20 years ago. Judge Khoo subsequently went into private practice and was among the first batch of lawyers to be appointed Senior Counsel in 1997, an honour bestowed by a selection committee comprising the Chief Justice, Attorney-General and Judges of Appeal of the Supreme Court.

Gopalan Nair

5. Mr Gopalan Nair had sent an email to various people in Singapore (including the Attorney-General) making various scandalous allegations against Justice Belinda Ang, a judge of the Singapore Supreme Court. This was in respect of a hearing by her to assess damages in a defamation suit which Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew had won against the SDP, its chief Dr Chee and his sister Chee Siok Chin. He had written that “the judge Belinda Ang was throughout prostituting herself during the entire proceedings, by being nothing more than an employee of Mr Lee Kuan Yew and his son and carrying out their orders”. He also posted the same remarks on his blog.

6. The presiding judge at the trial of Gopalan Nair found that these words were, on any reasonable reading, an insult to the judge in question, and scandalised and attacked the said judge, the judiciary, and the system of administration of justice in Singapore. The judge was convinced that a custodial sentence was appropriate because, notwithstanding Nair’s own admission that the word “prostituting” was too strong, he had said nothing that was mitigating, and in fact, stood by his insults. Nair did not file an appeal.

Tang Liang Hong

7. In dealing with the case of Tang Liang Hong, the Paper states that Tang’s wife had her passport confiscated and was made a co-defendant of the defamation suit. In fact, after leaving Singapore, Tang faced charges for evading taxes. His wife’s passport was impounded, but later released. A

Mareva injunction was obtained against Tang to require him to disclose the whereabouts of his assets. It was when Tang failed to comply with orders of court that default judgments were entered.
