

# I was blamed for party's missteps

**Ex-Workers' Party member blames resignation on chairman Sylvia Lim**

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**I**T HAS been a tough week for the Workers' Party (WP).

As if the feud with the coordinating chairman of People's Action Party (PAP) town councils, Dr Teo Ho Pin, over the management of Aljunied-Hougang Town Council (AHTC) isn't enough, a former party member has criticised the WP in his blog.

Mr Sajeew Kamalasanan – who joined the party in 2006 – left the WP last May because of unhappiness over the selection of cadre members.

He wasn't picked.

Cadre members have voting rights, are more involved in decision making and get to vote in the central executive council elections.

In a statement released last year, Mr Sajeew, 43, said he was disappointed he was not made a cadre after the 2011 General Election, while most of the other candidates and ordinary members were nominated and given cadreship. It is understood that in the past, all election candidates would usually become cadres.

Mr Sajeew posted his blog, which provides a perspective on how cadre members are picked, on the anniversary of his resignation on May 12.

In the blog post titled "The Real Reasons for Resigning from The Workers' Party", the owner of an interior design firm pinned the blame on party chairman Sylvia Lim. Ms Lim is also the chairman of the AHTC.

Mr Sajeew, who was the WP's Nee Soon GRC candidate, also claimed he was wrongly blamed for missteps involving the party after he quit.

Since the 2011 General Election, a number of members – including Mr Eric Tan and Mr Mohamed Fazli Talip – have left the party.

Last July, former assistant secretary-general Poh Lee Guan was expelled for trying to put himself up as a spare candidate in May 2012's Hougang by-election.

So far, the party has not responded to Mr Sajeew's blog post.

The New Paper also sent queries to Ms Lim and WP media team chairman Mr Gerald Giam earlier this week, but they had not replied at press time.

"It is puzzling why these things are being brought up one year after Sajeew left the party," said political observer Dr Wong Wee Nam, 64. "But I don't think the blog post is an indication of any fissures within WP," he added.

Nominated Member of Parliament and Singapore Management University law lecturer Eugene Tan said: "Mr Sajeew appears to want the WP to respond to his concerns leading to his resignation as well as the party's position vis-à-vis minority race members."

Mr Sajeew had previously alleged that WP had in the past been hesitant in recognising the contributions of its minority party members, ex-candidates and volunteers.

He added: "Whether this dialogue-cum-tea session with the minorities is a PR exercise ('wayang') or a sincere attempt to reach out to the minorities, only time will tell."

## Allegations

Last year, Mr Sajeew alleged that when he asked Ms Lim why he was not nominated, one reason she gave was that "it has been the party's experience that Indians tend to leave after getting party cadreship". In response, Ms Lim dismissed the allegations as "baseless and absurd".

Political observer Bilveer Singh, 56, who is an adjunct senior fellow of the Centre of Excellence for National Security at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, said such troubles will "naturally brew" once a political party gains some power.

"The WP is beginning to experience political normalcy and troubles, and its honeymoon is over," added Mr Singh.

"If it continues to undertake such missteps... (and may) even (be) rejected by many in the next election, especially those who saw it as a knight in a shining armour rushing to fight for peoples' interests."

But Assistant Professor Tan, 43, said Mr Sajeew's blog post will be "a non-issue" with "little, if any, repercussion on the WP," especially as it is fighting off questions by the PAP over transparency in the WP's relationship with its town council managing agent, FM Solutions and Services.

When contacted, Mr Sajeew declined further comment on the blog post.



**OUT:** Mr Sajeew Kamalasanan.

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