



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
23 JANUARY 2020**

**IN RESPONSE TO MEDIA QUERIES IN RELATION TO  
MR LI SHENGWU'S FACEBOOK POST OF 22 JANUARY 2020**

On 22 January 2020, Mr Li Shengwu said on Facebook that he will not continue to take part in the contempt proceedings brought against him.

2 The contempt proceedings were started on 4 August 2017. This was because Mr Li had published a Facebook post on 15 July 2017 which, in the AGC's view, was a contemptuous attack on the Singapore Judiciary. Mr Li had said: "Keep in mind, of course, that the Singapore government is very litigious and has a pliant court system". The post also included a link to a New York Times editorial titled "Censored in Singapore".

3 Mr Li's post received wide publicity. He must have known this would happen, given his status as Mr Lee Kuan Yew's grandson, his inflammatory statement and the timing of his post.

4 When the AGC came to know of his post, the AGC asked Mr Li if he would apologise and withdraw his statement. The AGC made it clear that if Mr Li did so, no proceedings would be brought against him. Mr Li was thus given an opportunity to apologise and close the matter. But he refused to withdraw his statement, or apologise.

5 Mr Li's conduct suggests a sense that he is above the law. That is apparent from his consistent complaint that these proceedings should not have been brought against him at all.

6 The AGC has brought contempt proceedings on several occasions when similar contemptuous statements had been made against the Singapore Judiciary. For example, in 1994, contempt proceedings were brought against Mr Christopher Lingle, the International Herald Tribune and others, for suggesting that the Singapore government relies upon "a compliant judiciary to bankrupt

opposition politicians”. The Supreme Court held that Mr Lingle’s words were in contempt. In 2010, Mr Alan Shadrake’s statement about “[t]he absence of independence in a compliant judiciary” was also found by the Supreme Court to amount to contempt. Given the strikingly similar language used by Mr Li in his post (in particular, “pliant court system”), the AGC took the view that his statement was likewise in contempt.

7 The need to take action against people who make baseless, contemptuous statements against the Singapore Judiciary has long been made clear, from the days of Singapore’s founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Mr Lee repeatedly emphasised the importance of ensuring that such statements are dealt with firmly, to protect public confidence in the administration of justice in Singapore. Mr Lee also gave evidence in court in (civil) proceedings arising out of the article written by Mr Lingle. Mr Li would know of these facts. Nevertheless, he not only impugned the Singapore Judiciary using similar language, but also refused to apologise and withdraw his statement. Now he suggests that these proceedings are in some way “unusual”.

8 Mr Li’s decision not to defend his statement is a clear acknowledgment that his defence has no merits. The reality is that Mr Li is now facing some serious questions in the hearing, and it is obvious that he knows that his conduct will not stand up to scrutiny. He has therefore contrived excuses for running away.

9 Mr Li makes two complaints. First, he complains that parts of his defence affidavit were struck out by the Court. This was because Mr Li filed an affidavit which contained matters that were scandalous and irrelevant to the issues in the case. Contrary to Mr Li’s allegations, such striking out applications are expressly provided for in the Rules of Court and are regularly made. In this case, after hearing full arguments (including from Mr Li’s counsel) on 22 November 2019, the High Court struck out several parts of Mr Li’s affidavit. Mr Li was directed to re-file his defence affidavit to comply with the Court’s order. Mr Li complied with the Court’s order and did not appeal. Now, 2 months later, he uses this as one of his two excuses.

10 Mr Li’s second complaint is about the service of the cause papers on him out of Singapore. While the Court of Appeal did not accept all of the AGC’s arguments, the Court confirmed in April 2019 that he had been validly served. This was again after full arguments (including from Mr Li’s counsel). Now, more than 9 months later, he rehashes the same complaint. His basic objection is that he should not have been served with the cause papers at all. This is in reality a demand that he be treated differently from all others.

11 The timing of Mr Li's decision not to participate in these proceedings is significant. The AGC has applied to cross-examine Mr Li on his defence affidavit and for Mr Li to answer some questions on oath about his post. Such cross-examination will bring out the truth as to what actually happened, and Mr Li's intentions in making the post. The questions he was asked included how many Facebook friends he had at the time of his post and whether they included members of the media. This is relevant to the question of whether Mr Li would reasonably have foreseen his post to be published by the media. Mr Li refused to answer these questions. The clear inference is that his answers would have been damaging to his case.

12 As early as August 2017, Mr Li had already stated that he would not be returning to Singapore for the proceedings. It is therefore clear that he never intended to come back to Singapore to defend himself, but was using legal representation in the proceedings as a platform to launch baseless allegations against the AGC and others. That strategy failed. His decision to withdraw from these proceedings, close to the hearing of the AGC's applications, was clearly made to avoid the possibility that he will have to answer questions on oath in public and disclose information that he has, to date, refused to reveal.

13 If Mr Li has nothing to hide, he should make himself available for cross-examination and answer the questions posed to him on oath. If he believes that his statement was not in contempt of the Singapore Judiciary, he should continue to defend the proceedings. The fact that Mr Li has chosen not to, at this point (when there are pending applications to cross-examine him and obtain answers to questions he has consistently tried to avoid), and has contrived excuses to explain his decision, shows what he really thinks.

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