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DEPUTY REGISTRAR NAVIN ANAND
17 April 2026

IN THE STATE COURTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

[2026] SGDC 136

District Court / Originating Claim No 1154 of 2025
(Assessment of Damages No 16 of 2026)

Between

Ng Kai Hoe Raymond

… *Claimant*

And

Wong Peng Kong

… *Defendant*

JUDGMENT

[Damages — Assessment — Defamation]

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Ng Kai Hoe Raymond
v
Wong Peng Kong

[2026] SGDC 136

District Court — Originating Claim No 1154 of 2025 (Assessment of Damages No 16 of 2026)
Deputy Registrar Navin Anand
9 April 2026

17 April 2026 Judgment reserved.

Deputy Registrar Navin Anand:

1 The Claimant, Mr Ng Kai Hoe Raymond, commenced a defamation action in DC/OC 1154/2025 ("OC 1154") against the Defendant, Mr Wong Peng Kong, in respect of an article shared on the Defendant's Facebook account.

2 The Defendant did not participate in OC 1154, and a default judgment was entered in favour of the Claimant with damages to be assessed (the "Default Judgment").

3 I heard the Claimant's evidence in relation to the assessment of damages. After considering the evidence and despite the Defendant not participating in the proceedings, I award nominal damages of $1 to the Claimant. In essence, there was limited or *de minimis* publication of the libel, and in any event, the Claimant's reputation is not deserving of legal protection.

I set out my full grounds below.

Background

Parties

4 The Claimant holds himself out to be a businessman who operated a franchise scheme known as "Vendshare" (the "Vendshare scheme"), where individuals or "franchisees" could co-own stakes in coffee vending machines located across Singapore.[1]

5 Not much is known about the Defendant, aside from the fact that he has a Facebook account.[2]

The Online Article

6 The Claimant's claim in OC 1154 is founded on an article published on or around 17 March 2021 on the "RICE" website (the "RICE Website"), which is operated by a Singapore-incorporated company, Rice Media Ptd Ltd ("Rice Media").[3] The article is titled "These Singaporeans Lost Money in a Financial Scheme. What Can They Actually Do About It?" (the "Online Article"), and can be accessed using the website link: <https://www.ricemedia.co/current-affairs-features-singaporeans-lost-money-financial-scheme-vendshare-raymond-ng/> (17 March 2021).[4] The relevant extract of the Online Article is

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1 Statement of claim in OC 1154 at para 1.

2 Affidavit of Evidence-in-Chief of Ng Kai Hoe Raymond dated 26 December 2025 ("RN AEIC"), Exhibit A, at 39.

3 Minute Sheet for DC/AD 16/2026 dated 9 April 2026.

4 Statement of claim in OC 1154 at para 3(b).

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reproduced below:[5]

> Raymond Ng is a businessman.
>
> On LinkedIn, Raymond presents himself as an entrepreneur, graduating from NUS with a degree in Computer Science. His companies are registered in Singapore under various names, including Katalyst Pte. Ltd and Candle Consulting Pte. Ltd.
>
> One of Raymond's business ventures is Vendshare, a company that enables 'franchisees' to co-own stakes in coffee vending machines located across Singapore. On Vendshare's website, the company states that it wants to "empower the middle class to grow their income," by using 'blockchain technology' to distribute profits.
>
> …
>
> 1. Raymond has collected deposits from over 200 Singaporeans under the Vendshare scheme. These franchisees hail from all walks of life: students, retirees, self-employed Grab drivers, civil servants and people with disabilities.
>
> 2. Through in-person interviews conducted by RICE, as well as Whatsapp conversations, dozens of franchisees have alleged that Raymond collected deposits from them upfront and provided no payouts in return. Raymond's reasons for non-payment? Their contracts do not stipulate that franchisees must be paid.
>
> …
>
> 3. Raymond has had at least seven police reports filed against him by Vendshare franchisees.
>
> Complaints about Raymond's company Candle Consulting Pte Ltd have also been published on a website called Scamsg.com, where one reviewer alleges that Vendshare is a 'complete scam'.
>
> …
>
> "If nobody stands up to this guy, then he will keep getting away with it," said Eric. "*He will keep collecting money from vulnerable people, and nothing will happen to him. Vendshare is not an isolated venture. As we investigated Raymond's activities, we just kept digging up more dirt. It's really disgusting. The fact that this person can continue to do this to people and get away scot free.*"

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5 RN AEIC, Exhibit A, at 1-17.

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[emphasis added]

Action against Rice Media

7 On 10 June 2021 (*ie*, around 3 months after the Online Article was posted on the RICE Website), the Claimant and two companies involved in the Vendshare scheme, namely, Candle Consulting Pte Ltd and Vendshare Pte Ltd (collectively, the "Vendshare Plaintiffs") commenced a defamation action regarding the contents of the Online Article in DC/DC 1231/2021 ("DC 1231") against Rice Media, its director, and the author of the Online Article (collectively, the "Rice Media Defendants"). In DC 1231, the Vendshare Plaintiffs sought an injunction and damages against the Rice Media Defendants.[6]

8 However, DC 1231 did not get substantively off the ground.

(a) On 3 March 2022, the Court ordered the Vendshare Plaintiffs to disclose six categories of documents to the Rice Media Defendants (the "Discovery Order").[7]

(b) As the Vendshare Plaintiffs failed to do so, an unless order was imposed on 24 June 2022 (the "Unless Order").[8] The Unless Order essentially provided for the dismissal of DC 1231, by striking out the statement of claim, if the Vendshare Plaintiffs did not disclose the documents ordered under the Discovery Order by 29 June 2022.

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6 Statement of claim in DC 1231.

7 DC/ORC 1062/2022.

8 DC/OC 1949/2022.

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(c) The Vendshare Plaintiffs did not comply with the Unless Order, and on 30 June 2022, DC 1231 was accordingly dismissed, and judgment was entered in favour of the Rice Media Defendants (the "DC 1231 Judgment").[9]

(d) Subsequently, on 30 September 2022, the Vendshare Plaintiffs applied in DC/SUM 3112/2022 ("SUM 3112") to set aside the DC 1231 Judgment. After a series of hearings, SUM 3112 was dismissed on 3 July 2023,[10] and the Vendshare Plaintiffs did not appeal against this decision.

9 In other words, the Claimant failed to obtain *any* relief or damages against the Rice Media Defendants in respect of the Online Article, and the Online Article continues to remain accessible on the RICE Website.

The Defendant's Facebook Post

10 On or around 18 March 2021, the Defendant "shared" the Online Article on his Facebook account (the "Facebook Post").[11] Based on the sole screenshot adduced by the Claimant for these proceedings, the Facebook Post elicited a total of one reaction and one share. It is not known who reacted to, or shared,

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9 DC/JUD 1448/2022.

10 DC/ORC 1846/2023.

11 RN AEIC, Exhibit A, at 40.

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the Defendant's Facebook Post.

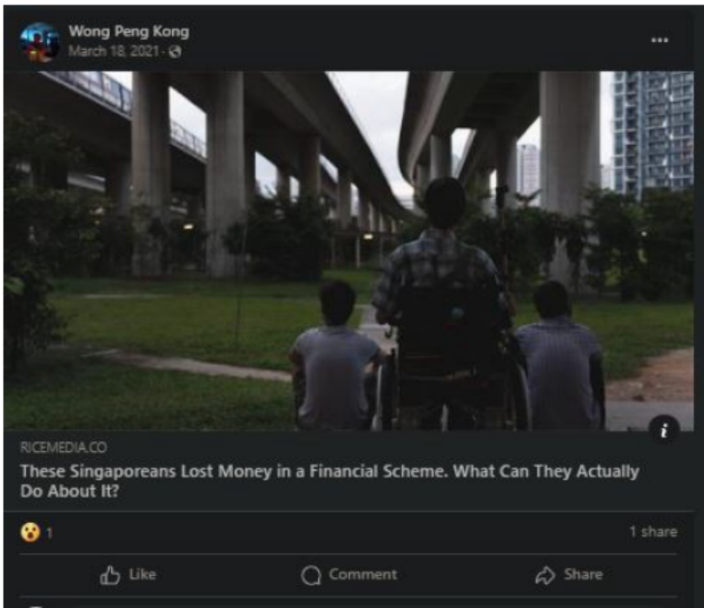

Figure 1: Screenshot of the Defendant's Facebook Post.

11 According to the Claimant, he was first alerted to the Defendant's Facebook Post "sometime in 2024 or 2025 … by his part-time staff, one Mr Lee Yi Heng ("Mr Lee"), who had encountered it online".[12] It is unclear why Mr Lee offered this information to the Claimant more than 3 years after the Defendant's Facebook Post, but the Claimant avers that "on and off, there are parties sending me notifications of people defaming me."[13]

12 Thereafter, on or around 27 February 2025, the Claimant wrote to the Defendant to demand that he: (a) delete the Facebook Post; (b) issue a public

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12 Minute Sheet for DC/AD 16/2026 dated 9 April 2026; Supplementary Affidavit of Evidence-in-Chief of Ng Kai Hoe Raymond dated 20 March 2026 ("RN SAEIC") at para 16.

13 Minute Sheet for DC/AD 16/2026 dated 9 April 2026.

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apology; and (c) pay a settlement amount of $5,000 to the Claimant.[14] This letter further stated that if these demands were not met by the stipulated deadline, the Claimant would commence legal proceedings against the Defendant and "leave it to the [Court] to decide damages up to **S$ 50,000**" [emphasis in original].[15] The Defendant did not respond to the Claimant's letter.[16]

Action against the Defendant

13 On 24 June 2025, the Claimant commenced OC 1154 against the Defendant. In his statement of claim, the Claimant pleads that the following words from the Online Article (see [6] above) are defamatory (the "Offending Words"):[17]

> … "He will keep collecting money from vulnerable people, and nothing will happen to him. Vendshare is not an isolated venture. As we investigated Raymond's activities, we just kept digging up more dirt. It's really disgusting. The fact that this person can continue to do this to people and get away scot free."

14 According to the Claimant, the sting of the Offending Words is that he has engaged in criminal and dishonest conduct, and the exploitation of vulnerable people, through the Vendshare scheme, and has faced no consequences thus far.[18]

15 Although the Claimant effected service of the originating claim and the

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14 RN AEIC, Exhibit A, at 40-50.

15 RN AEIC, Exhibit A, at 49.

16 RN AEIC at para 104 (at 37).

17 Statement of claim in OC 1154 at paras 5-7.

18 Statement of claim in OC 1154 at para 7; Minute Sheet for DC/AD 16/2026 dated 9 April 2026.

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statement of claim on the Defendant on 25 July 2025,[19] the Defendant did not file or serve a notice of intention to contest or not contest. As a result, the Claimant applied for, and obtained, the Default Judgment on 13 August 2025. The Default Judgment provided for damages and costs to be assessed by the Court.[20]

16 On 9 January 2026, the Claimant filed the notice of appointment for assessment of damages,[21] and a hearing for the assessment of damages was fixed on 9 April 2026 (the "Assessment hearing"). The Defendant was absent for the Assessment hearing even though the Claimant had informed him of the same by way of registered post on 24 March 2026.[22] As I was satisfied that the Defendant had been given adequate notice, I proceeded with the Assessment hearing in the Defendant's absence.

17 The Claimant and his wife, Ms Iris Koh Hsiao Pei ("Ms Koh"), gave evidence at the Assessment hearing. After the evidence-taking was completed and given that the Assessment hearing proceeded on an uncontested basis, the Claimant was content to rely on his opening statement to make oral closing submissions. In this regard, the Claimant submits that he should be awarded $60,000 in general damages and $10,000 in aggravated damages based on the seriousness of the defamatory imputations, the Claimant's personal and professional reputation, and the Defendant's aggravating conduct.[23]

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19 Affidavit of Ng Kai Hoe Raymond dated 11 August 2025.

20 DC/JUD 1358/2025.

21 DC/AD 16/2026.

22 Exhibit C-1.

23 Joint Opening Statement ("JOS") at paras 10-17, 20-28, and 31-39.

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The law

18 The principles governing the assessment of damages in defamation actions have been covered extensively in our case law. It suffices for me to highlight a few general points on assessment proceedings that are conducted in a defendant's absence, before setting out the circumstances where an award of nominal damages is appropriate.

Legal implications where the defendant is absent

19 Where default judgment is entered in a defamation action due to a defendant's failure to file and serve the notice of intention to contest or not contest, there are broadly two legal implications that follow.

20 First, the defendant against whom the judgment is granted will not be able to dispute liability, and only the amount of damages and costs remain to be determined at an assessment of damages hearing: see *Shanmugam Kasiviswanathan v Lee Hsien Yang and another matter* [2024] 5 SLR 194 ("*KS v LHY*") at [21].

21 Second, while a defendant's failure to file a defence may mean admitting to the facts pleaded in the statement of claim to substantiate damage, the quantum of damages will have to be assessed, and cannot follow as a matter of admission: see *Lee Hsien Loong v Xu Yuan Chen and another suit* [2022] 3 SLR924 ("*LHL v XYC*") at [127]. In other words, a claimant still bears the burden of proving his loss or damage by evidence, and the assessment is not made by default despite the defendant's absence at the assessment hearing: see *U Myo Nyunt (alias Michael Nyunt) v First Property Holdings Pte Ltd* [2021] 2 SLR 816 at [47]. With that said, a claimant's task of discharging his burden is

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made much easier because the Court is essentially left with the evidence and submissions from only one side: see *KS v LHY* at [23].

Circumstances justifying the award of nominal damages

22 The tort of defamation is concerned with protecting a person's reputation (*ie*, what other people think of him): see *Golden Season Pte Ltd and others v Kairos Singapore Holdings Pte Ltd and another* [2015] 2 SLR 751 at [35]. General damages in defamation actions are compensatory in nature and serve to: (a) console a claimant for the distress he has suffered from the publication of the statement; (b) repair the harm to his reputation; and (c) vindicate his reputation: see *KS v LHY* at [27]. Specifically, in relation to the last compensatory objective of vindication, this refers to the process of erasing the effects of the defamation and making good a reputation that has suffered *actual damage*, through awarding a sum sufficient to convince a bystander of the baselessness of the charge: see *Wright v McCormack* [2024] 2 WLR 869 ("*Wright*") at [47].

23 In determining the appropriate quantum of general damages, the Court will consider a host of factors, including: (a) the nature and gravity of the defamation; (b) the mode and extent of the publication; and (c) the conduct, position and standing of the claimant: see *KS v LHY* at [28]. As a starting point, the law presumes that a claimant suffered *some* damage to his reputation as a result of the defamation, and there is no need for the claimant to go further to *prove* that any particular person has thought worse of him because of the publication: see *LHL v XYC* at [75]. However, this presumption of damage is not absolute: see *LHL v XYC* at [75].

24 In certain circumstances, the Court may award nominal damages if it is satisfied that there was no harm or damage to a claimant's reputation: see *The*

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Law of Damages (Andrew Tettenborn gen ed) (LexisNexis, 2nd Ed, 2010) ("*The Law of Damages*") at para 2.11. In my view, there are at least two clear instances where this may arise, that being: (a) where the publication of the defamatory material is limited; or (b) where the claimant's reputation is not worthy of legal protection.

(1) Limited Publication

25 The extent of publication is an important factor in the assessment of damages (see *A Balakrishnan and others v Nirumalan K Pillay and others* [1999] 2 SLR(R) 462 at [48]), as it reflects the scale of the distribution of the defamatory material (see *KS v LHY* at [45]), and the corresponding damage to a claimant's reputation. As such, where publication of the defamatory material is limited, nominal damages may be appropriate if the damage to a claimant's reputation is in effect *de minimis*. This proposition finds support from the English Court of Appeal decision in *Jameel (Yousef) v Dow Jones & Co Inc* [2005] QB 946 ("*Jameel*"), which was subsequently applied by the Singapore High Court in *Qingdao Bohai Construction Group Co, Ltd and others v Goh Teck Beng and another* [2016] 4 SLR 977 ("*Qingdao Bohai*").

(a) *Jameel* involved the publication of an alleged libel through an article posted on the website of the "The Wall Street Journal Online". The claimant commenced action in England even though the publication in question was made to no more than five individuals within jurisdiction, of whom three were associates of the claimant. The English Court of Appeal found the claimant's claim to be an abuse of process, and stated (at [68]–[70]):

> 68 … At the end of the day the trial will determine whether the publications made to the five subscribers were protected by qualified privilege. If they were not, *it does not seem to us that the jury can properly be directed*

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> *to award other than very modest damages indeed. These should reflect the fact that the publications can have done minimal damage to the claimant's reputation …*
>
> 69 *If the claimant succeeds in this action and is awarded a small amount of damages*, it can perhaps be said that he will have achieved vindication for the damage done to his reputation in this country, *but both the damage and the vindication will be minimal. The cost of the exercise will have been out of all proportion to what has been achieved. The game will not merely not have been worth the candle, it will not have been worth the wick.*
>
> 70 … It would be an abuse of process to continue to commit the resources of the English court, including substantial judge and possibly jury time, *to an action where so little is now seen to be at stake …*
>
> [emphasis added]

(b) *Qingdao Bohai* similarly concerned alleged libel through the internet, this time in the form of 12 online articles posted on various websites. The Court, having found that the element of publication was not established, held that the decision in *Jameel* was an additional reason to dismiss the action since the publication in Singapore would have been very exceedingly limited and restricted, and not of a sufficient number to justify a judgment for (any) damages (at [61], [145]–[149], and [166]).

26 While the decisions in *Jameel* and *Qingdao Bohai* did not, strictly speaking, involve an assessment of damages following a default judgment, both did find that the respective claimants in each case would not be entitled to substantial damages due to the limited publication of the defamatory material. By parity of reasoning, the Court in an assessment of damages must be entitled to award nominal damages when there is only limited publication, to reflect the insignificant damage to the claimant's reputation and how little is at stake.

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(2) Reputation unworthy of legal protection

27 In appropriate cases, the Court may find that a claimant's reputation is so undeserving of protection that he is only entitled to nominal damages: see *Tang Swea Phing v Chan Tam Hoi (alias Paul Chan) and another appeal* [2025] 4 SLR 1104 ("*Tang Swea Phing*") at [85]. This, arguably, is another manifestation of a lack of harm or damage caused to one's reputation, which justifies an award of nominal damages. Put simply, if a claimant is of little or no worthwhile reputation, there can hardly be any damage to his reputation caused by the defamatory publication in the first place.

28 In deciding whether a claimant's reputation is undeserving of protection, the Court may consider any evidence properly admitted that would be relevant in assessing what award of damages would be necessary and proportionate to the legitimate aims of compensation and vindication: see *Wright* at [61]. At a minimum, this would include facts directly relevant to the contextual background in which a defamatory publication was made, any evidence that tends to establish that the defamatory statement complained of was partly true, or evidence that an aspect of the claimant's reputation, being one which the Court considers relevant in all the circumstances, was at least partially undeserved so as to reduce the need for vindication: see *Tang Swea Phing* at [91]–[94]; and *Wright* at [61]. The following three decisions are apt to illustrate the varied circumstances under which the Court has awarded nominal damages due to an undeserving reputation.

29 The first authority, *Grobbelaar v News Group Newspapers Ltd* [2002] 1 WLR 3024, involved a plaintiff footballer who sued for articles which alleged that he had "thrown" or fixed football matches. The defendant failed to prove that the plaintiff had in fact "thrown" matches, but the evidence showed that he

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had a corrupt agreement to do so and had in fact taken bribes. The House of Lords awarded the plaintiff nominal damages of £1, as the plaintiff had no reputation deserving of legal protection. In the words of Lord Bingham of Cornhill (at [24]):

> … *The tort of defamation protects those whose reputations have been unlawfully injured. It affords little or no protection to those who have, or deserve to have, no reputation deserving of legal protection.* Until 9 November 1994 when the newspaper published its first articles about him, the [plaintiff's] public reputation was unblemished. But he had in fact acted in a way in which no decent or honest footballer would act and in a way which could, if not exposed and stamped on, undermine the integrity of a game which earns the loyalty and support of millions … *It would be an affront to justice if a court of law were to award substantial damages to a man shown to have acted in such flagrant breach of his legal and moral obligations.*
>
> [emphasis added]

30 The second authority, *Tang Swea Phing*, concerned loans extended by the first defendant to companies controlled by the plaintiff. Owing to the companies' failure to repay the loans, the first defendant engaged the second defendant, a debt collection company, which served defamatory letters of demand (that identified the plaintiff as a "debtor" and demanded the repayment of $120,000) at various locations. At first instance, the District Court awarded $10,000 in damages to the plaintiff for the defamation. On appeal, Pang Khang Chau J reduced the damages to a nominal sum of $1, and reasoned as follows (at [96]):

> The foregoing facts demonstrate that [the plaintiff], being the person in control of the Companies, had caused or allowed the Companies to incur the Loans and had subsequently failed to cause the Companies to repay the Loans despite receiving repeated requests from [the first defendant] to do so. *For the purposes of assessing damages, any reputation of [the plaintiff] as a businessman, including any reputation concerning his ability to manage businesses, which [the plaintiff] wished to protect and vindicate had to be assessed*

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> *against the foregoing facts. In my view, the foregoing facts had so destroyed this particular area of [the plaintiff's] reputation that he could not be said to have any reputation, concerning the subject matter of the defamatory remarks made in the present case, to be worthy of legal protection.* Consequently, I held that there was no reason to award substantial damages to [the plaintiff].
>
> [emphasis added]

31 In the third authority, *Wright*, the claimant brought a claim in libel against the defendant in respect of the defendant's messages on Twitter and his YouTube broadcast, which alleged that the claimant's claims to be the inventor of the Bitcoin cryptocurrency were fraudulent. At first instance, the Court allowed the claim but awarded nominal damages of £1. This was because the claimant had, in the course of the proceedings, lied and attempted to deceive the Court to exaggerate the harm caused to his reputation, specifically, he had alleged that he was disinvited from conferences due to the defamatory publications (which was found to be untrue). On appeal, the English Court of Appeal affirmed the award of nominal damages, and explained the relevance of the claimant's lies in the following terms (at [68], [69] and [76]):

> 68 … [The judge] was clearly right to treat Dr Wright's lies and deception as "*disreputable facts that are properly before the court*"… *The issue is whether he was legally wrong to conclude that these disreputable facts were relevant to damages or, as he put it, whether they logically affected the extent to which Dr Wright was entitled to vindication through an award of damages* … The libel here was not that Dr Wright "is not Satoshi". It was that Dr Wright had made fraudulent claims, in other words that he had deceived or tried to deceive the public about his status. *The sting of the libel was one of dishonesty.*
>
> 69 The extent to which relevant disreputable conduct that emerges in the course of a trial should affect the ultimate award of damages is a matter of judgment, peculiarly within the province of the trial judge …
>
> 76 … The judge took account of the claimant's lies and his attempt to deceive the court as part of the process of ascertaining the claimant's entitlement, *namely a sum in*

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> *damages that would be proportionate to the aims of compensating and appropriately vindicating the relevant aspect of the claimant's reputation. In this case, where the libel was an accusation of dishonesty, the dishonest conduct of the litigation was relevant for that purpose.* This follows from the particular nature of the interest protected by the law of defamation.
>
> [emphasis added]

32 In the final analysis, a claimant should only be compensated for injury to a reputation that he actually possesses. If it transpires, whether from the facts that existed at the time of the publication or subsequently at trial, that a claimant has little or no worthwhile reputation which could conceivably be damaged by the sting of the defamatory remarks, it would be excessive and unjust for substantial damages to be awarded since there is no injured reputation to repair or vindicate, and no justifiable reason to console the claimant for any distress suffered.

Decision on damages

33 With the above principles in mind, I now explain why the Claimant is only deserving of an award of nominal damages. Having considered the relevant factors (see *KS v LHY* at [28]), my decision rests on the following: (a) there was limited publication of the Online Article through the Defendant's Facebook Post; and (b) leaving aside the issue of publication, the Claimant's reputation is not deserving of legal protection.

34 Before setting out my detailed grounds, I preface my reasons with two observations.

35 First, the libel here consists of the Defendant's *republication* of the Online Article on his Facebook account. The Defendant's republication is a *new and separate instance* of defamation (see *Review Publishing Co Ltd and another*

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v Lee Hsien Loong and another appeal [2010] 1 SLR 52 at [212]), and it goes without saying that the Claimant will need to prove the *reach* or the *audience* to this republication. Accordingly, insofar as the Claimant is alleging damage to his professional reputation and corresponding distress from the aforesaid harm, he must show that this is *attributable* to the Defendant's republication.

36 Second, while the evidence and arguments in this case are inevitably from one side (*ie,* the Claimant's), this does not mean that the Court will approach the case with blinkers and ignore evidential weaknesses or ineluctable conclusions to be drawn from the facts. Put simply, the Court will not blindly accept everything the Claimant says, and will assess and decide based on the totality of the evidence.

Limited Publication of the Online Article

37 I turn now to consider the *extent* of publication in this case.

38 To begin with, posting material on the Internet alone, or showing that a post is accessible in Singapore, is not publication for the purpose of the law of defamation: see *Qingdao Bohai* at [37]-[38]. There is no presumption that material on the Internet has been published, and a claimant will need to go further to establish, on the balance of probabilities, that a third-party reader viewed the material in Singapore: see *Qingdao Bohai* at [37]–[41].

39 Internet publication can be proven directly by showing that at least one other person, other than the claimant, saw or read the online material in Singapore: see *Qingdao Bohai* at [38]. Alternatively, Internet publication can be proven indirectly by evidence that supports an inference of publication to a substantial number of third-party readers in Singapore, such as the number of "likes", "reactions", "shares" or comments to the post, the number of "friends"

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or "followers" a defendant has on the social media platform, and the privacy settings of the post: see *Qingdao Bohai* at [38] and [136]; and *Lee Hsien Loong v Leong Sze Hian* [2021] 4 SLR 1128 at [45]. While the fact of publication is not in issue due to the Default Judgment, the extent of publication remains highly relevant to the assessment of damages (see [25] above).

40 The Claimant contends that the publication in this case reached a "substantial and indeterminate number of persons".[24] This contention is not borne out by the evidence, and the extent of publication of the Online Article through the Defendant's Facebook Post is minimal *at best*.

(a) For a start, there is no direct evidence of widespread publication. Further, the Claimant's statement that Mr Lee encountered the Defendant's Facebook Post online (see [11] above) is inadmissible hearsay evidence, and in any event, there is no evidence that Mr Lee accessed the Defendant's Post in Singapore.

(b) The indirect evidence relied on by the Claimant also does not support an inference of publication to a substantial number of third-party readers in Singapore. The Defendant's Facebook Post attracted a meagre total of one reaction and one share (see Figure 1 above). While the Defendant has around 584 "friends" on Facebook,[25] which is by no means a large number, very little is known about the Defendant (see [5] above), and it is therefore unclear how many of these "friends" are even based in Singapore. The Claimant alleges that the privacy settings of the Defendant's Facebook Post was set to "public",[26] but also claims that the

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24 RN AEIC at para 41 (at 13).

25 *Ibid*, Exhibit A, at 39.

26 *Ibid* at para 30 (at 11).

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Defendant blocked him on Facebook and that he "no longer had direct access to verify the status of the [Facebook Post]".[27] Even if I accept the Claimant's account that the Defendant's Facebook Post was once public (presumably when the Claimant accessed it in 2024 or 2025),[28] the fact that the Facebook Post only garnered (at most) 2 responses after more than 3 years shows that it did not gain any traction, and most certainly not to a level that can support an inference of substantial and extensive publication.

41 Thus, in view of the manifestly limited extent of publication, the damage to the Claimant's reputation from the Defendant's Facebook Post is minimal or *de minimis*. This finding alone is sufficient to justify my award of nominal damages.

Claimant's Reputation Undeserving of Legal Protection

42 The Claimant and Ms Koh gave extensive testimony on the alleged harm to the Claimant's reputation, and the resultant distress caused to him.

(a) In his Affidavit of Evidence-in-Chief, the Claimant stated as follows on the harm to his reputation and standing:[29]

> 86. … I have suffered **actual harm to my reputation and standing**, including:
>
> people treating me as dishonest or unethical;
>
> loss of trust from customers, partners, collaborators, and/or members of the public;
>
> avoidance / shunning in social and professional settings; and

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27 *Ibid* at para 111 (at 38).

28 Minute Sheet for DC/AD 16/2026 dated 9 April 2026.

29 RN AEIC at paras 86-90 (at 31-32).

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> continuing reputational stigma because the material remains readily accessible online.
>
> 87. Prior to March 2021, I was regularly invited to participate in press, television, and radio interviews, typically occurring every few months. These invitations ceased after March 2021, and since then I have not been invited to take part in any such interviews.
>
> 88. Before March 2021, I was also invited on a recurring basis to speak at industry and business-related events, including events involving professionals and industry participants. After March 2021, I have not received any further invitations to speak at such events.
>
> 89. In addition, prior to March 2021, I would regularly engage with the press by writing in to provide commentary and opinions on matters relating to business, information technology, and related topics. Following March 2021, this engagement effectively stopped, and I no longer received responses or opportunities to contribute in the same manner.
>
> 90. Taken together, these changes represent a marked departure from my pre-March 2021 professional experience and, in my view, reflect a loss of professional visibility, credibility, and standing that I experienced following the publication of the [Online] Article and the [Defendant's Facebook Post].
>
> [emphasis in original]

(b) The Claimant also gave the following evidence regarding the alleged distress he experienced:[30]

> 96. The above has affected my **daily functioning**, including my ability to concentrate and work productively. I found myself spending time monitoring online postings, responding to queries, and attempting to correct misconceptions, instead of focusing on my ordinary work and responsibilities.
>
> 97. It also affected my **rest and sleep**. On many occasions, I experienced difficulty falling asleep and/or disturbed sleep due to worry that new posts would surface overnight, that fresh commentary would be circulated, and that my reputation would be further harmed.

[30] RN AEIC at paras 96-98 (at 33).

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> 98. The situation has also impacted my **family life** and domestic peace …
>
> [emphasis in original]

(c) According to Ms Koh, the harm caused by the Defendant's Facebook Post extended beyond business interactions and affected his personal and family relationships:[31]

> 28. In particular, I observed that certain family members on my side of the family began to distance themselves from [the Claimant] after the publication(s). This included reduced communication, reluctance to meet in person, and a noticeable change in tone towards him.
>
> 29. I observed a similar pattern of distancing by certain family members on [the Claimant's] side of the family, including less frequent interactions, fewer invitations to gatherings, and more guarded engagement.
>
> 30. In some instances, the distancing occurred in circumstances where it appeared that family members had been influenced by what they had seen or heard about [the Claimant] following the publication(s) complained of.

43 At the Assessment hearing, I specifically queried both the Claimant and Ms Koh as to whether the alleged harm and distress was caused by the Defendant's Facebook Post, and both maintained that it was.[32]

44 In my view, it beggars belief that the Defendant's Facebook Post, with one reaction and one share (see Figure 1 above), and the extremely limited publication (see [40] above), can cause the purportedly widespread reputational harm and severe distress alleged. There is no evidence that the Claimant's business associates, friends, or family even knew (much less knew of) or are

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31 Affidavit of Evidence-in-Chief of Iris Koh Hsiao Pei dated 2 January 2026 at paras 28-30.

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remotely connected with the Defendant, and it is extremely improbable that industry contacts and the Claimant's extended family are now avoiding him due to the Defendant's Facebook Post. While it may be conceivable that the Claimant was affected by persons coming across the Online Article, there are a host of possibilities as to how that could have occurred (which do not involve the Defendant's republication). This includes direct access through the RICE Website and Rice Media's social media accounts, which the Claimant failed to curtail following the dismissal of DC 1231 (see [7]–[9] above). As such, the Claimant has not shown, based on the evidence before me, how the widespread reputational harm and severe distress as alleged are even attributable to the Defendant's Facebook Post (see [35] above). Given the inherent improbabilities of these assertions, I do not accept the Claimant's evidence.

45 This leads me to my second point, which is that I am not impressed with the Claimant's blatant attempts to exaggerate the extent of harm and distress suffered, and I find the exaggerations here to be of a similar nature to those in *Wright* (where the claimant falsely exaggerated that he was disinvited from conferences (see [31] above)). Given that the sting of the libel here is dishonesty and unethical conduct (see [13] above), the Claimant's attempts to exaggerate the damage suffered during the course of these proceedings is a disreputable fact relevant for the assessment of damages, especially since the damages he seeks is to protect and vindicate his "visible and *credible* public profile in business, consultancy, fundraising, technology and professional speaking, where *trust*, *integrity* and *public confidence* were material assets" [emphasis added].[33]

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[33] JOS at para 13.

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46 There is another aspect of this case which troubles me, that being the Claimant's lack of candour regarding the dismissal of DC 1231.

(a) DC 1231, being the first defamation action commenced by the Claimant regarding the Online Article,[34] is relevant under s 16 of the Defamation Act 1957 (2020 Rev Ed) that allows the Court to take into account other actions commenced by a claimant for damages in respect of same or similar defamations: see Doris Chia, *Defamation: Principles and Procedure in Singapore and Malaysia* (LexisNexis, 2nd Ed, 2024) at para [16-121].

(b) In his evidence, the Claimant attempted to downplay the dismissal of DC 1231, contending that it "arose from procedural and evidential issues, in particular the failure to produce documents concerning the financial performance of the two corporate plaintiffs, [Candle Consulting Pte Ltd] and [Vendshare Pte Ltd]".[35] However, I pointed out to the Claimant that his account was not entirely true, as there was also a failure on his part to disclose correspondence with the Singapore Police Force on any investigations arising out of the Vendshare scheme, which led to the imposition of the Unless Order and the subsequent dismissal of DC 1231.[36]

47 For completeness, the Claimant informed me of the existence of other pending defamation actions[37] regarding the Online Article,[38] and stated that he

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35 RN SAEIC at para 6.

36 DC/ORC 1062/2022; DC/OC 1949/2022; DC/JUD 1448/2022.

37 DC/OC 1874/2024, MC/OC 3025/2025, and DC/OC 1167/2025.

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filed the present action in OC 1154 without Candle Consulting Pte Ltd and Vendshare Pte Ltd "to avoid the issue of *res judicata*".[39] Undoubtedly, this statement suggests that the manner in which the Claimant has commenced the various defamation actions after the dismissal of DC 1231 calls for a proper explanation. No such explanation has been provided thus far, but as the full facts of DC 1231 are not before me, I will not comment on this statement any further, save to say that I am left with many unanswered questions.

48 Ultimately, the Claimant's attempts to exaggerate the damage he suffered (see [44]–[45] above) is sufficient for me to find that his reputation is undeserving of legal protection, and it would be excessive and unjust in this case for substantial damages to be awarded. This is another standalone ground to justify my award of nominal damages.

Costs

49 For the foregoing reasons, I award the Claimant nominal damages of $1.

50 On the issue of costs, the following observations by Chua Lee Ming J in *Youprint Productions Pte Ltd v Mak Sook Ling* [2023] 3 SLR 1130 are apposite (at [11]):

> … where the trial is bifurcated and the claimant fails to prove loss during the hearing for the assessment of damages, the claimant would generally either recover no costs or be ordered to pay the costs of the assessment. *This is because at the assessment hearing, the only issue is quantum of loss and a claimant who merely receives nominal damages has effectively lost*: *The Law of Damages* at para 2.15.
>
> [emphasis added]

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39 *Ibid.*

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51 Given my finding on the minimal damage to the Claimant's reputation from the Defendant's Facebook Post (see [41] above), it is evident that this action should never have been commenced. Nevertheless, since the Defendant did not participate in OC 1154, I find it appropriate to make no order as to costs.



Navin Anand
Deputy Registrar

The Claimant in person;
The Defendant absent and unrepresented.

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