Look at reality, not the rhetoric: Workers’ Party

TANYA FONG
tanyafong@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE – Look at the reality, rather than listen to rhetoric — that was the response from the Workers’ Party after its motivations and the strength of one of its candidates’ connection and commitment to Singapore were questioned.

In a stout defence of the WP’s manifesto and its potential candidate Chen Show Mao, party chairman Sylvia Lim picked up the gauntlet thrown down by People’s Action Party organising secretary (special duties) Ng Eng Hen and Ms Indranee Rajah, adviser in Tanjong Pagar Group Representation Constituency.

Dr Ng had asked in a letter to The Straits Times about Mr Chen’s stake in Singapore and if he could identify with the aspirations of Singaporeans after living abroad for many years.

Ms Lim reiterated to reporters yesterday that Mr Chen, a corporate lawyer, was “very much rooted” here — his parents and only sister live here and he returns regularly.

She cited his involvement in the WP’s activities since 2007 and his service in the Singapore Management University Law School’s advisory board.

She added that his connection and commitment to Singapore was obvious, from the time he did National Service as a permanent resident, throughout his upkeep of family ties here, to his plans to return permanently with his family, even if he loses at the General Election.

While Dr Ng had wanted Mr Chen to answer the questions directly, Ms Lim said her colleague had already answered these questions in the media and will do so again when the WP candidates are introduced from today.

Ms Indranee had also written to The Straits Times, astonished by the WP’s vision of a First World Parliament, which she said was “fictional” because it was not modelled after any particular country.

Ms Lim replied yesterday: “I’m surprised she finds it astonishing. The PAP itself has always claimed to be a First World Government, and I don’t believe they claim to model themselves after any particular government of a developed country. In fact, they like to claim they would be a model for others to follow.

“Similarly for WP: Our vision of a First World Parliament, we’ve explained in detail, is one where we have an Opposition party performing a robust check function in the House itself. It doesn’t have to be similar to any other country’s Parliament, so long as it works for Singapore and is effective for accountability. That’s the most important thing.”

As for Ms Indranee’s argument that no Opposition party acts only in the national interests, Ms Lim said: “The WP has always said we’ll put the national interest before party interest. Let’s not forget that the PAP was once in Opposition before. Is she saying that, at the time, the PAP also didn’t act in the national interest?”

Asked about the scrutiny the WP has received from the PAP, Ms Lim said: “I think they’re looking toward the campaign (period) and how Singaporeans might support the WP or otherwise. So they’d want to shape public opinion in their own fashion.

“It’s important for Singaporeans to look at the facts and look at our candidates in terms of what they’ve been doing and how they’ve been connected to Singapore and look at the reality rather than the rhetoric.”

The WP will elaborate further on its selection process and criteria for candidates today. It also confirmed it will contest in the GRCs of Aljunied, East Coast, Mountbatten-Kallang and Nee Soon Group and the Single Member Constituencies of Hougang, Joo Chiat, Punggol-East and Sengkang West.