

## Netizens hail Halimah

### MP draws praise for engaging blog directly after being misquoted

**Ansley Ng**

**TODAY**, 6 Jan 2010

SINGAPORE - She felt she had been misquoted, and wrote to the editor of a local website for a correction. But that simple request by NTUC deputy secretary-general Halimah Yacob to *The Temasek Review* has sparked off a buzz among netizens, with some viewing her move as a positive one in engaging the alternative media.

In an interview with MediaCorp last week, Mdm Halimah had noted that some middle-aged degree holders lost their jobs and ended up driving taxis because of the downturn. Under-employment, she said, was unavoidable because of limited job opportunities from slow economic growth.

However, in its article on Dec 31, *Temasek Review* wrote that Mdm Halimah had said it was unavoidable that middle-aged degree holders end up driving taxis.

In a letter to the editor of the website, Mdm Halimah said the article "did not accurately reflect the essence" of what she had said and asked for a correction. The website has since amended its article and also posted her letter online.

Many lauded Mdm Halimah's move on the website.

"TR (*Temasek Review*) should truly write a thank-you letter to Halimah Yacob and encourage her to participate more and also invite her to ask her fellow PAP MPs to engage comments, views and opinions in TR positively like her," wrote netizen southchinasea.

"It's a good sign that a very senior PAP/MP like Mdm Halimah to respond (sic), let's likewise return the respect rationally without the usual rhetorics (sic)," wrote PeterL.

Calling it a "significant" step for alternative media, Mr Tan Tarn How, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, noted that other MPs before Mdm Halimah had engaged netizens, but in a different manner. "In the past, the government has addressed issues brought up without necessarily making a link with specific websites. For instance, Acting Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts Lui Tuck Yew addressed concerns expressed online, but did so via the mainstream media than by engaging directly with individual websites," he said.

Last year, Mr Lui had spoken against netizens who posted unkind comments about MP Seng Han Thong after the latter was set on fire by a disgruntled constituent.

Singapore Management University assistant professor Eugene Tan noted: "On when to seek clarifications, the priority would be to seek corrections from the more prominent websites, blogs or portals.

"The inaccuracy in question, even if perceived to be minor by some, is deemed to be significant and important enough for Mdm Halimah to clarify her position."

When contacted, Mdm Halimah told MediaCorp she saw the article while surfing the Web over the holidays. "It is useful to engage when it is incorrect," she said. "There was an inaccuracy and I wanted it corrected. Judging from the reaction, people do appreciate that point."