

# KOBRE & KIM

TOWER 42  
25 OLD BROAD STREET  
LONDON, EC2N 1HQ  
WWW.KOBREKIM.COM  
TEL +44 (0) 20 3301 5700

12 October 2020

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL  
FOR ADDRESSEE ONLY  
BY EMAIL**

Dewald van Rensburg  
amaBhungane  
Centre for Investigative Journalism  
[dewaldvr@amabhungane.org](mailto:dewaldvr@amabhungane.org)

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION NOR DISSEMINATION**

Dear Sir,

**Our client: Mr. Murari Lal Jalan**

We act for Mr. Murari Lal Jalan (“**Mr. Jalan**”). We have been passed a copy of your email to MJ Developers sent on 7 October 2020 (the “**Email**”), in which you set out a number of questions on the basis of what you describe as the “context” provided in the Email.

The overall thrust of the Email suggests that: (i) MJ Developers is in some way owned or funded by the Gupta family, and that (ii) given the allegations now made against the Gupta brothers, you are looking into whether there may be some impropriety in the ownership or funding arrangements of MJ Developers. That is not the case and it would be defamatory and unlawful to allege otherwise. MJ Developers and its associated entities are 100% owned by Mr. Jalan (save for one project which is owned by his nephew), and have never received any funding or investment from the Gupta family, directly or indirectly.

We understand that amaBhungane’s objective is to expose wrongdoing through stories which are accurate and fair using advanced standards and methods. As you will be aware as an investigative journalist, as well as the seriously harmful effect that publishing false and defamatory material can have on the subject, it is contrary to the public interest to do so. We are therefore instructed to write to inform you of some inaccuracies and/or misconceptions in the Email which render the questions and the approach to Mr. Jalan redundant.

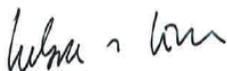
1. The Email suggests that Mr. Jalan “...*might know we have taken an interest in the business ties (most recently via MJ Developers) between the Jalan family and the extended Gupta family*”.
  - a. We understand this only to mean it is you (as opposed to any third party) who has taken an interest.
  - b. Mr. Jalan is not aware of anyone taking any interest in what is erroneously described as “the business ties” between “the Jalan family” and “the Gupta family”.
  - c. It is unclear who you intend to refer to as the “Jalan family”. The family of Mr. Jalan consists of his wife and children. In this letter we refer to those individuals as the “Jalan Family”. MJ Developers is a brand name which is 100% owned by Mr. Jalan. A number of companies, each also 100% owned by Mr. Jalan (save for one, owned by his nephew), conduct business under the MJ Developers brand. References in this letter to MJ Developers include those companies owned by Mr. Jalan which conduct business under the MJ Developers brand name.
2. Your Email refers to “...*the Jalan family and the extended Gupta family, members of which face extensive allegations of corruption, fraud and money laundering in South Africa*”.
  - a. We understand the first paragraph of the Email to mean that only members of the “Gupta family” face allegations in South Africa, and not the Jalan Family.
  - b. The Jalan Family is not under investigation anywhere in the world, nor are they aware of any reason why they would be investigated. Should the Email mean that the Jalan Family is under investigation in South Africa, that is denied. You are on notice that it would be defamatory and unlawful if you were to publish such an allegation.
  - c. You appear to be conflating the public allegations levelled at the three Gupta brothers with those you describe in the Email as the “*extended Gupta family*” and indeed your questions refer to “*the Guptas*”, who you do not define. We note that you do not refer to the Gupta brothers anywhere in the Email, no doubt on the basis that you are aware that there are no business ties between those individuals and Mr. Jalan.
3. In response to the questions relating to Uzbekistan, we are instructed that Mr. Jalan is a self-made businessman with over 40 years’ experience across numerous sectors. He has

operated in Uzbekistan for about 10 years. Neither the government of Uzbekistan nor its states have given any special concessions in the form of tax relief, land concessions or funding to Mr. Jalan and he and his investments are treated like any other foreign investment in the country, as per any relevant investment treaty.

4. Whilst you have not raised it in the Email, for completeness, it is a matter of public record that Mr. Jalan's brother's daughter is married into the Gupta family. Mr. Jalan accordingly knows some of the Gupta family through that extended family connection in India. However, the private marriage carries no business link or interest between the Jalan Family and the Guptas. Mr. Jalan and his brother maintain separate business entities. Their personal relationships have no connection with their business activities, which are separate and distinct.
5. In response to your questions about shareholding, the Gupta family are not co-owners of, and have provided no funding to, MJ Developers. It is wrong to suggest that it is, or ever has been, co-owned or funded by the Gupta family. None of the members of the Gupta family, including the individuals identified in the Email, co-own MJ Developers or any of the associated entities of MJ Developers.
6. Mr. Garg is a marketing advisor to MJ Developers. He is not a shareholder in MJ Developers or any of the associated entities of MJ Developers. We are instructed that Mr. Garg and Mr. Jalan considered a 50/50 joint venture in Uzbekistan. However, Mr. Garg withdrew from the project before the company began trading. Mr. Garg did not invest any funds and has no investment or ownership interest in MJ Developers or any of its projects or entities.
7. All of Mr. Jalan's businesses comply with relevant due diligence and compliance requirements under applicable laws.

Mr. Jalan rejects any implied allegations of impropriety in the conduct of MJ Developers' business, and reserves his rights should any such defamatory and unlawful allegations identifying our client be published more widely than in the Email and contrary to the tenets of responsible journalism.

Yours faithfully



Kobre & Kim (UK) LLP

# KOBRE & KIM

TOWER 42  
25 OLD BROAD STREET  
LONDON, EC2N 1HQ  
WWW.KOBREKIM.COM  
TEL +44 (0) 20 3301 5700

## **PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL BY EMAIL**

Dewald van Rensburg  
amaBhungane  
Centre for Investigative Journalism  
[dewaldr@amabhungane.org](mailto:dewaldr@amabhungane.org)

19 October 2020

### **NOT FOR PUBLICATION NOR DISSEMINATION**

Dear Mr. van Rensburg

**Our client: Mr. Murari Lal Jalan**

We refer to your email of 15 October 2020 (the “Second Email”).

The Second Email concludes that Mr. Jalan is “intimately involved” in business dealings with “the extended Gupta family” and the serious allegation that he “may very well be a front for some of them in their endeavours”. Mr. Jalan has no relationship, business or otherwise, with the Gupta brothers. It is categorically denied that Mr. Jalan acts as a “front” for the Gupta brothers (or the “extended Gupta family”). Whilst you allege that what you say amounts to “further indications” and “instances” of business ties with members of the Gupta family, there is nothing in the Second Email to support the serious allegation with which you conclude the Second Email. You are seeking to allege wrongdoing on the basis of what you describe as “an inference” and to publish such an allegation would be defamatory and unlawful.

We are instructed to respond to the enquiries in the Second Email as follows to provide you with more information about the questions you ask, which suggest either a misunderstanding and/or lack of information by your source(s) or a deliberate attempt to besmirch Mr. Jalan’s reputation.

The Second Email asks what role the five individuals named in the First Email play at MJ Developers. None of Mr. Raswant, Mr. Narayan nor indeed the Gupta brothers has any role with

MJ Developers nor is associated with any of Mr. Jalan's entities. The remaining three individuals are employees in MJ Developers in Uzbekistan. These individuals are not the subject of any charges or legal proceedings by any authority in the world to the best of Mr. Jalan's knowledge. We repeat that neither the Gupta brothers nor the five individuals nor the wider Gupta family have any ownership interest in, nor have they provided any funding to, any MJ Developers projects.

With respect to the referenced event, the five individuals named were part of a large gathering of more than 200 people from India and the Middle East at the launch of one of MJ Developers' projects. The launch event was held at multiple locations over a period of time, including in Uzbekistan, India, and UAE. These individuals did not share the stage with Mr. Jalan and, following the launch events, many individuals came to meet and shake hands with Mr. Jalan and were photographed in the process. This is not an indication of any special business or personal relationship with Mr. Jalan and/or any unique privilege(s) granted to the individuals photographed.

In respect of the Jet Airways bid, you have asked questions about a number of commercially confidential matters. So far as may be relevant:

1. There are no business ties between Mr. Jalan, the Jet Airways bid and the Gupta brothers and/or the Gupta extended family. None of the individuals connected with the Gupta family, including those you have listed, are either directly or indirectly involved in the Jet Airways bid. The Gupta family, extended or otherwise, is not funding the bid.
2. Mr. Jalan does not know Mr. Naresh Goyal, the former chief executive of Jet Airways, personally or professionally. Mr. Jalan has never met Mr. Naresh Goyal.
3. Mr. Jalan has no knowledge of the matters raised regarding the 2010 Mumbai-Johannesburg route. The Second Email is the first time he has heard of this.

In response to the remainder of your questions:

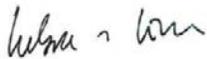
1. Patanjali India Distribution Company ("PIDC") was a not-for-profit company incorporated specifically for doing charitable work. Mr. Jalan held 0.1% shares in PIDC and none of the Gupta brothers are invested in it. It seems you are referring to another entity sharing the name 'Patanjali' reported to have been incorporated by the Gupta brothers, as PIDC (where Mr. Jalan held 0.1% shares) was never capitalized and has never carried out any operations to date. This was a charitable endeavour that never got off the ground.
2. Regarding LCR Investments, Mr. Jalan transferred his shareholding in Bengal Orion to his brother in 2017. Mr. Jalan has no involvement in or knowledge of any transactions concluded by or through Bengal Orion since then. We understand that the LCR Investments

transactions you have mentioned took place after Mr. Jalan exited Bengal Orion. He had no involvement in those transactions.

3. As previously stated, Mr. Jalan and Mr. Garg have a business association which predates the marriage of Mr. Garg. The loan extended by Mr. Jalan to Mr. Garg/ to entities controlled by him was a commercial, arm's length transaction. Mr. Jalan denies any suggestion of impropriety in respect of that transaction.
4. As to the contribution in the wedding, Mr. Jalan's brother wished to make a contribution as is a common custom between Indian families associated by marriage or engagement. Mr. Jalan owed his brother money pursuant to a wider agreement between them and the payment was made by Mr. Jalan at the request of his brother, in part-settlement of that. That was a matter between Mr. Jalan and his brother and nothing to do with the Gupta family.

As before, Mr. Jalan rejects any implied allegations of impropriety and all of his rights and remedies remain reserved.

Yours faithfully



Kobre & Kim (UK) LLP