

Written Representation 79

Name: Liew Siow Gian Patrick
Business Owner

Received: 28 Feb 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

Danger Of Fake News

Recent “fake news” about the lawyer who defended City Harvest Church leaders has undermined credibility of our legal system.

If this and other fake news are not being nipped at its bud, it may pose a bigger threat to our social stability and national security.

Case in point, in the US, Russia was alleged to have manipulated voters' opinions and influenced outcomes of the 2016 presidential election.

<https://www.nytimes.com/news-event/russian-election-hacking>

Results of ongoing investigation about that influence may have major implications on not just the United States but also on the free world.

Closer home, in recent times, there were many fake news locally and from overseas about relations between Singapore and China.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/3-myths-about-spore-china-ties>

Despite clarifications by our authorities and local press, there are still many Singaporeans who choose to believe another version or the other side of the story.

They form a position on that basis and are influencing others to tarnish our government's foreign policy and affect our image.

Many of the emotionally-charged online responses to these fake news are beset with more lies, half truths, and other misinformation.

In a highly interconnected world, it's hard to shield Singapore from informational threats by dark forces from within the country and without.

These threats can cause major damages and affect progress of the country. The authorities will have to step up their vigilance and efforts against these influences.

Ensure that these influences do not not affect our overall security and stability.

Explore ways to eliminate such negative influences by blocking or tagging them wherever they appear on cyberspace.

Implement other initiatives to prevent them from being shared and even after they've been shared, they can be deleted, be corrected, or continued to be tagged.

The relevant authorities can improve the way they communicate truths and respond promptly to any misunderstanding and undue reaction.

Educate our people on how to research, think critically, and make better-informed judgements.

Cut lifelines of companies and individuals that promote and propagate fake news by restricting or stopping their revenues from advertisements and other sources of income.

Take recalcitrants and their supporters to task for deliberately spreading fake news, restrict or stop their sources of support, and if possible highlight their actions to the public.

And explore possibilities of developing a "name and shame" database of recalcitrants who are based overseas so that all stakeholders can help put pressure on them and stop the malpractice.

Key stakeholders from the public, private and people sectors can be roped in to help communicate vital messages, correct misinformation, and provide feedback to the relevant authorities.

Fact-checking systems can be set up to verify critical information and rate credibility and reliability of various sources of information.

Consumers can be forewarned prior to them viewing these fake news or cautioned after they have viewed these news when they are found to be fake.

As a country, we should join hands to educate our people, from young to know how to research, think critically, and be discerning about credibility and reliability of their sources of information.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/committee-to-get-views-on-threat-of-fake-news>

Dr Liew Siow Gian Patrick
Business Owner