

Media Release

THE ONLINE CITIZEN ASIA’S WEBSITE, FACEBOOK PAGE, TWITTER ACCOUNT PAGE AND LINKEDIN PAGE MADE DECLARED ONLINE LOCATIONS DUE TO MULTIPLE ONLINE FALSEHOODS

The Minister for Communications and Information has today declared The Online Citizen Asia’s (TOCA) website, Facebook page, Twitter account page and LinkedIn page (the “**online locations**”) as Declared Online Locations¹ (“**DOL**”) under the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act 2019 (POFMA). The Declaration will come into effect on 22 July 2023.

2. The Declaration was made following multiple falsehoods communicated on the online locations. The Declaration will be in effect for two years, until 21 July 2025. During the period that the Declaration is in effect, TOCA’s website as well as its Facebook page, Twitter account page and LinkedIn page are each required to carry a notice, stating that each of these online locations has been declared as a DOL. With the notice, visitors to these DOLs will be warned that TOCA has a history of communicating falsehoods on these online locations (see [Annex](#) for details).

3. The Declaration does not mean that the DOLs will need to cease operations. TOCA’s website, Facebook page, Twitter account page and LinkedIn page may remain in operation. However, the statutory requirements under Part 5 POFMA relating to amongst others, the de-monetisation of the DOLs, must be complied with. POFMA prohibits a person from deriving financial benefit from operating a DOL, thereby preventing operators of DOLs from profiting from the communication of falsehoods.

4. During the time that the Declaration remains in effect:

- a. It shall be an offence for the operator of a DOL to derive financial or other material benefit from operating these online locations.
- b. Service providers² and digital advertising intermediaries³ must take reasonable steps to ensure that paid content that they include or cause to be included on these DOLs are not communicated in Singapore.
- c. Individuals⁴ and companies must not provide financial support to these DOLs if they know or have reason to believe that by doing so, they would support, help or promote the communication of falsehoods in Singapore on the DOL.

5. Members of the public are advised to be alert to TOCA’s history of communicating misinformation, and to fact-check information published at these DOLs.

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION
21 July 2023

¹ See Annex for an explanation of when online locations are declared as Declared Online Locations under POFMA.

² Examples include digital advertising agencies.

³ Examples include advertising exchanges.

⁴ This includes members of the public.



Annex – Overview of POFMA Declared Online Locations

Background on DOLs

- Under Section 32 of POFMA, an online location may be declared as a Declared Online Location if:
 - i. It has carried three or more different false statements of fact that are the subject of active Part 3 or Part 4 Directions (e.g., POFMA Correction Directions); and
 - ii. At least three of these false statements of fact had been communicated on the online location within six months before the date of the Declaration.
- TOCA's website, Facebook page, Twitter account page and LinkedIn page have each met the requirements to be declared as Declared Online Locations. Each of these online locations carried at least three different false statements of fact communicated within six months prior to the Declaration, that are the subject of active POFMA Directions. This includes at least three different false statements of fact, which were the subject of a POFMA Correction Direction on 7 May 2023⁵ and a POFMA Correction Direction on 19 May 2023.⁶
- A notice must be published in the Government Gazette when a Declaration is issued. A [registry](#) of DOLs can be found at the POFMA Office website.
- The owner or operator of the Declared Online Location, or any person with editorial control over the online location, may apply to the Minister for Communications and Information to vary or cancel the declaration. If the Minister refuses the application, an appeal can be made to the High Court.

Past DOLs

- Four locations were previously declared as Declared Online Locations. These were:
 - i. States Times Review Facebook Page (15 Feb 2020)
 - ii. Singapore States Times Facebook Page (6 May 2020)
 - iii. Alex Tan's Facebook Page (6 May 2020)
 - iv. National Times Singapore Facebook Page (28 May 2020)
- These pages were operated by Alex Tan. As Tan did not comply with the DOL requirements, Access Disabling Orders were subsequently issued to Facebook to disable access by end-users in Singapore to the abovementioned pages. Facebook complied with the orders.

⁵ The falsehoods pertain to allegations against the Police concerning the Police's treatment of an elderly woman, which were published in an article on TOCA's website on 2 May 2023.

⁶ The falsehood pertains to an allegation that Tangaraju s/o Suppiah neither had an interpreter nor access to legal counsel during his trial, which was published on TOCA's website on 28 April 2023.

