

# SINGAPORE'S CONTROVERSIAL FOREIGN INTERFERENCE LAW



## Issue

A new law has been passed by Singapore that enables them to prevent, detect or disrupt any foreign interference in domestic politics.

## Background

The law was necessitated after a series of hostile information campaigns undertaken by foreign adversaries using local proxies.

## Details

Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam introduced the Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Bill, which was approved after a 10 hr long discussion.

## The Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act

- The government gets power to deal with foreign interference in the form of electronic communication including online communication. These actions may harm public interest.
- Individuals posing a threat to the country's political sovereignty will be identified under the law and strict actions will be taken.
- Individuals involved in political process of Singapore will be categorized and they will have to periodically disclose funding sources.
- The Home Minister will have the right to initiate investigation, stop access to certain websites, social media accounts, applications and internet services.
- Newspapers and media publishing information about political issues will have to disclose their foreign authors or foreign entities involved in publishing a particular article.

- It will not apply to Singaporeans discussing political issues or to any other foreign correspondents commenting on Singapore politics, in an open, transparent way.

#### Reasons cited for the law

- Actions cause severe harm to Singapore's national security
- It can compromise Singapore's military capabilities and security relationships
- It can threaten Singapore's economic stability
- Undermine Singapore's political sovereignty and system of government

#### Powers

- The Minister of Home Affairs will have the power to ask internet intermediaries to block content, cease the communication of accounts, restrict accounts and disable accounts.
- The Minister will have the right to block access to the said internet intermediary if the internet intermediary fails to follow the government's directions.

#### Politically significant persons

- Political parties
- The Members of Parliament,
- Political office holders
- Leader of the Opposition
- Leader of the House
- Election candidates and their agents

#### Punishments under the act

The cases under the act would be heard by the tribunal and not in open court as it may involve national security issues. The tribunal's decisions would be final.

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