

Select Committee on deliberate online falsehoods wants more diverse views

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SINGAPORE: The Select Committee tasked to look into combating the problem of deliberate online falsehoods has received 22 submissions from the public so far.

But it is hoping to garner more suggestions - including some from foreign experts - so it will have a broad range of ideas to work with, said Deputy Speaker of Parliament and committee chair Charles Chong.

Last month, Parliament appointed a Select Committee to look at the problem of misinformation online, amid the rising threat of fake news worldwide. The committee has since made an open call to all relevant stakeholders for their views, and it is seeking feedback, especially from news organisations and online platforms like Facebook and Google.

"News media often receive a lot of information from their own sources," said Mr Chong. "It'll be interesting to find out how they vet and fact-check this information and the rigour of the measures that they take to verify the accuracy of such information.

"The tech companies too. With technology advancing so much, how do they also go about vetting the accuracy of the information that they've posted on the Internet?"

Dr Carol Soon, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, said it is important to hear from as diverse a range of participants as possible, so the committee can come up with the most holistic solution to the problem.

"We're not just talking about academics, but also social media companies, educators and members of the media industry who can come forward to share their views and recommendations on what needs to be done," said Dr Soon.

She added that this includes hearing the views of foreign experts, which the committee intends to do.

"Soliciting and hearing from experts from countries which are facing this problem would help the process, in terms of uncovering what are some of the possible measures to deal with this problem, and from there, we could perhaps consider what is appropriate for the Singapore context, what can be adopted and what can be tweaked."

Members of the public have until the end of the month to submit their suggestions. After reviewing them, the Select Committee will then decide who to invite to speak at the public hearings set to take place in the second half of March.

The sessions will be held in the Public Hearing Room at Parliament House for the first time since the building was opened in 1999.