

Two Facebook pages, both fake, spoof the Singaporeans First party

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It has been only three days since former presidential candidate Tan Jee Say announced the formation of a new political party, but two fake Facebook accounts posing to represent it have already popped up.

Just hours after Mr Tan unveiled the Singaporeans First party and its logo on Sunday, the Facebook page Singaporeans First Party was set up.

The fake page had the party's logo as its profile picture before it was altered early yesterday morning to reveal that the people responsible for the page are the same ones behind the satirical, role-playing Facebook page SMRT Ltd (Feedback).

The fake page carried radical suggestions allegedly from the party's manifesto, such as implementing a four-day work week and a year-long national service for women which would include cooking classes and tailoring.

SMRT Ltd (Feedback) made its big revelation just a few hours before another, more official-looking Facebook page was set up: SFP Singapore Official.

A text post on Monday evening stated that it was the "official page of Singaporeans First Party" and they were "disappointed that someone else tried to hijack our platform to serve their own means".

However, when My Paper contacted Mr Tan yesterday, he confirmed that the party has not set up any Facebook accounts thus far.

With regard to the two fake accounts, he laughed and said they were "fun and cute". He didn't know who was behind the pages.

As to the party's logo being compared with that of ice cream brand Wall's, he said that Wall's was a "symbol of sweetness".

He said that the party "will issue a statement at an appropriate time" on this.

"We have to be careful about what we do moving forward," said Mr Tan. The party and its logo are yet to be approved by the Registry of Societies.

Such spoofing of a political party is not uncommon, said political experts My Paper spoke to.

"Internet memes and spoofing are not new phenomena," said Institute of Policy Studies research fellow Carol Soon.

"However, what is happening with the fake pages pose a tricky problem for a fledgling group that is trying to make its name and manifesto known," she added.

Gillian Koh, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, pointed out that the group's logo "will not be approved for use till it is registered, much less protected in any manner".

"I am sure Mr Tan knows that and perhaps it is why he is not ruffled by it," she said.

Many netizens, at one point or another, believed that the fake accounts were real. But, with little information on the new political group, this comes as no surprise.

"I think it will affect the party because it is new and people do not have any background knowledge about it," said netizen Chin Yiwen, 25.

"Impressions can be manipulated easily online, especially for such a new group. But, once the party has established itself, incidents such as this might no longer be significant," she added.