

S'poreans urged to make a stand against hateful posts Minister lauds Google's removal of 'vile' blog targeting Filipinos here

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HATEFUL posts do not reflect who Singaporeans are as a people and should not be accepted, Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin said yesterday. -- PHOTO: ST FILE

HATEFUL posts do not reflect who Singaporeans are as a people and should not be accepted, Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin said yesterday.

Calling on people to make a stand against "vile and vicious blogs", he added that he was glad that a blog targeting the Filipino population here had been removed.

"Blood Stained Singapore" was taken down by Google, which owns Blogger, the hosting publishing service used.

In his post on Facebook, Mr Tan criticised its hateful content, which had included a list of underhanded ways that do not break the law to be nasty to Filipinos here.

"This is not about freedom of speech or a debate about immigration or foreign workforce policy," he said. "This is about racism and xenophobia, and there is no place for racists and xenophobes in our society."

Mr Tan said Singapore has "always been an open society", attracting various people from all over the world.

"Vile and vicious blogs like this do not reflect who we are as a people, and we should make a stand and call it out when we see it," he said.

"I am glad that the blog has been taken down."

Police said yesterday that they are still investigating the matter.

It is unclear when exactly Google took down the blog. Its communications manager Sana Rahman told The Straits Times yesterday that the company does not comment on individual cases but referred to Blogger's content policy, which includes "content boundaries" on areas such as "hate speech".

This is defined by Blogger as "content that promotes hate or violence towards groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, age, veteran status, or sexual orientation/gender identity".

The Philippines Embassy in Singapore, which had on Tuesday published a notice in Tagalog on its webpage advising its nationals here to ignore the blog's contents, did not respond to press queries.

The notice said the embassy had immediately communicated to the Singapore Government the need to take appropriate action against the blogger in accordance with the law.

"Nonetheless, the embassy believes that the blogger's view is his own and does not reflect the general sentiment of those in Singapore," added the advisory.

The blog, however, is symptomatic of "a worrying trend of people expressing anti-foreigner and racist speech", said Mr Tan Tarn How, a researcher who co-authored a report on "corrosive speech" in Singapore last year.

There are contributing factors to the trend, including "the actual rise in such sentiments, the opportunity provided by the Internet, and unpreparedness for the freedom now available via the medium", he added.

"It is a problem because it corrodes the social fabric," said the researcher, who is of the opinion that a public apology by the blogger posted on the affected blog would have been more effective as "a marker of what is not allowed" than the complete takedown by Google.

If not "restrained appropriately", such vitriol online and off may lead some into thinking it is "acceptable to make disparaging statements about foreigners", said Dr Mathew Mathews, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies who examines societal cohesion.

"It is not acceptable for people to direct their unhappiness about certain living conditions at foreigners who legitimately work in Singapore," he added. "The fact that many Singaporeans are disgusted with such vicious blogs shows that the majority of Singaporeans do not support such anti-foreigner statements."