

## Singapore approves law to counter foreign interference



## Government passes controversial law that empowers authorities to investigate and stop foreign interference in domestic affairs

Singapore has passed a controversial law intended to prevent foreign interference in domestic politics.

The Foreign Interference Bill was approved on 13 September after a 10-hour parliamentary debate, and empowers the government to investigate and stop foreign entities from influencing national politics.

The law allows the authorities to compel internet service providers and social media platforms to provide user information and block content deemed hostile.

Addressing parliament, the Minister for Home Affairs, Kasisviswanathan Shanmugam,

said that Singapore was vulnerable to "hostile information campaigns" carried out overseas. "The internet has created a powerful new medium for subversion," he said.

Critics have raised concerns about the law's broad provisions and say it could be used to stifle free speech.

In a statement, Phil Robertson, Deputy Asia Director at Human Rights Watch, commented: "Today's passage of FICA constitutes a human rights disaster for community activists, independent media, and opposition politicians because it hands arbitrary power to the Singaporean →

## Pakistan media bill proposes jail term for journalists

Pakistan's government has introduced a draft media law that imposes a jail term for journalists, leading to widespread protest across the country.

Hundreds of journalists demonstrated against the proposed law outside parliament on 13 September as the country's President, Arif Alvi, addressed parliamentary members.

Under the proposed legislation, the government aims to consolidate existing media regulatory bodies and create a single agency to regulate all media, including print, broadcast and social media.

The new regulatory body, the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA), is expected to have an expanded scope of regulation for digital media.

Commenting on the draft bill, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) stated: "RSF and its Pakistani partner, Freedom Network, are supporting the campaign that Pakistani media outlets and journalists have launched against the proposed legislation, which was first unveiled in June and would create a powerful new entity called the Pakistani Media Development Authority."

Speaking to Deutsche Welle, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Fawad Chaudhary, said: "We are trying to engage with the protesting journalists and allow them to submit proposed changes if they have reservations [about the law]. We will not forcefully pass the law and will go through the legislative process with the consensus of all stakeholders, including opposition parties." ■

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## Canada's 9 Story Media Group acquires minority share in UK-based publisher Knights Of

Children's entertainment company 9 Story Media Group has acquired a minority share in Knights Of, a London-based publishing company, in a first-look deal.

As part of the terms of agreement, Toronto-based 9 Story Media Group has exclusive first-look rights to acquire audio-visual, merchandising, theatrical and ancillary rights to Knights Of's book properties.

Knights Of has an award-winning catalogue of bestselling authors. It was founded by Aimée Felone and David Stevens to improve exclusivity in children's literature.

Commenting on the transaction, Co-Founder Ms Felone said: "Bringing investors

on board has always gone beyond financial motives for us, so to bring on board a company, who is not only at the forefront of their media sector, but also so closely aligned with our ethos was an incredible opportunity for everyone involved."

Vince Comisso, President and CEO of 9 Story Media Group, commented: "We are thrilled to partner with Knights Of, which is changing the face of publishing by putting inclusion at the center of everything they do."

Mr Comisso added: "We are excited to collaborate with the Knights Of team and bring new stories from diverse voices to life on screen, so that no child is left behind." ■

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← government to punish anyone based on vague allegations of involvement with foreigners."

Mr Robertson continued: "Using this law, the government can... shut down viewpoints it doesn't like. Once again, Singapore demonstrates how little faith it has in its democracy by resorting to political measures better suited to authoritarian regimes that don't trust their people."

The new legislation comes two years after the government passed its anti-fake news law, which allowed the authorities to order internet services providers to block online content that is not in the public interest.

Social media providers have openly expressed concerns about the legislation. However, ministers have defended the need for the legislative change, stating that the country's multi-ethnic population made

## Alibaba sells share in Chinese TV network at a loss

Alibaba Group Holding has announced plans to divest its equity share in one of China's largest TV broadcasters just nine months after it bought them.

Alibaba plans to sell its 5% share in Mango Excellent Media at an estimated loss of CNY2.3 billion (USD356 million), according to a corporate filing to the Shenzhen Stock Exchange published on 23 September.

Mango Excellent Media owns Mango TV, which is popular for its variety of shows in China, and is one of several media-related investments funded by Alibaba.

The filing also states that Alibaba is seeking a waiver from an agreement not to sell the shares for one year.

The planned sale follows mounting political and regulatory pressure from the Chinese government, which has intensified its scrutiny of the media and technology industry over the past year.

The government has become increasingly concerned about the dominance that large, private technology companies have over media, finance and data in everyday life in China, through news and digital payments apps nationally.

Alibaba has expanded into a range of industries over the years and owns large shares in the country's most popular social media and online video platforms, such as Weibo (WB), Youku, Bilibili (BILI), Xiaohongshu, and Qutoutiao (QTT), as well as in China Business Network, a state-owned financial media outlet. ■

it more vulnerable to hostile information campaigns that would mislead Singaporeans.

Home Affairs Minister Mr Shanmugam explained: "This Bill is intended to address a serious threat that concerns our national security and sovereignty."

He added: "And these are important to ensure that Singaporeans continue to make our own choices on how we should govern our country and live our lives." ■

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