



**Date: March 16, 2025**

To,

**Ms. Annie**

Compliance Officer NBDSA

Zee Media Corporation Ltd.

No 19, Film City, Sector 16A

Noida – 201301

Email: [annie.1@zeemedia.esselgroup.com](mailto:annie.1@zeemedia.esselgroup.com)

**Subject: Complaint against show “Taal Thok Ke LIVE: होली करेंगे 'बदरंग', 'भाईजान' कराएंगे सिर कलम! LIVE #WaqfvsHoli” that aired and streamed live on Zee News on March 9, 2025**

**Dear Sir,**

We, at Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP), are writing to you with regards to a broadcast by Zee News on March 9, 2025, titled **“Taal Thok Ke LIVE: होली करेंगे 'बदरंग', 'भाईजान' कराएंगे सिर कलम! LIVE #WaqfvsHoli.”** (*Will they tarnish Holi... will 'Bhaijaan' have heads severed?*) The show in question surrounded the call for protest against the proposed Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024, announced by the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) and Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind earlier on March 13, 2025, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. It is important to mention that the date of the peaceful protest against the Bill was initially set for March 10, 2025, but later rescheduled to March 13 due to administrative reasons. Subsequently, with the Holi festival on March 14, 2025, AIMPLB, in a press conference at the Press Club of India on March 11, 2025, decided to defer the March 13 protest and scheduled it for March 17, 2025.

The program "Taal Thok Ke" systematically compromised journalistic integrity through its biased presentation and inflammatory discourse. Host Chandan Singh orchestrated a narrative that deliberately conflated a legitimate protest concerning the Waqf Amendment Bill with a fabricated threat to the Hindu festival of Holi. The program's reliance on sensationalist tickers and unsubstantiated claims, coupled with the host's selective questioning and interruptions, created a hostile environment that undermined the principles of fair debate.

Singh's conduct throughout the broadcast demonstrated a calculated effort to manipulate the narrative. He repeatedly ignored factual clarifications regarding the protest's rescheduling, instead opting to perpetuate a false narrative of deliberate disruption. His leading questions, such as **“Is it normal to start the protest just one day before Holi? Is this a coincidence? Is there a plan behind this?”** (Time Stamp: 03:40-03:59), were designed to provoke suspicion and reinforce a predetermined agenda. Singh's abrupt interruptions and dismissal of panellists' explanations,

particularly those attempting to provide context for the date changes, revealed a clear bias and a refusal to engage with factual information. Moreover, his active endorsement of panellists' inflammatory statements, like Pawan Bansal's claim of a "*larger conspiracy to turn Holi into chaos*" (Time Stamp: 04:55-05:22), further underscored his role in promoting a divisive and misleading narrative. We are complaining because of the host's deliberate misrepresentation of facts, biased moderation, and the creation of an environment conducive to communal discord.

### **About the incident**

On August 8, 2024, the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, and the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, 2024, were introduced in the Lok Sabha, sparking widespread opposition from various Muslim organizations, including AIMPLB, Jamia Ulema-e-Hindi, and others. They argued that the amendments violated the rights of Muslims to manage their internal waqf properties, viewing it as a direct attack on their waqf rights. The bill was criticized for proposing non-Muslim members in the waqf committee and allowing a collector to hear disputes over waqf properties. In response, a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), headed by Lok Sabha MP Jagadambika Pal, was formed to review the bill. Following the JPC's report, Muslim bodies expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed amendments, leading to a call for protests.

Originally, AIMPLB had scheduled a protest for March 10, 2025, coinciding with the beginning of the Parliament session, but it was postponed to March 13 due to administrative reasons. However, with Holi falling on March 14, the protest was rescheduled again to March 17, 2025, to avoid any overlap with the festival. This series of date changes was widely covered in digital and print media, with AIMPLB's spokesperson Dr. Syed Qasim Rasool Illyas explaining the reasons for the delays.

On March 11, 2025, AIMPLB officially announced that the protest would take place on March 17 at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, aiming to raise awareness among political parties, including those in the NDA government. The protest was positioned as a stand against the central government's proposed Waqf Amendment Bill, with the intent to invoke the conscience of secular political parties.

### **Content of the show:**

The show began with host Chandan Singh framing the theme in a biased and communal manner, setting the tone with a divisive narrative. He introduced the topic by saying, "*In Taal Thok Ke, we will discuss the threats being issued in the name of the Waqf Amendment Bill. We will also discuss the mindset that, in the name of gathering crowds, is becoming a challenge for the government. But amidst all these questions, the biggest question is that preparations have once again begun to turn cities, including Bhopal, into another Shabeen Bagh. Yes, just like how people had gathered in Shabeen Bagh a few years ago, how violence started from there and spread across the country, is there another conspiracy being hatched to repeat such an event? This is a big question. Many Muslim organizations have held meetings and officially released their respective agendas. The Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind even went so far as to say that protecting the Waqf Board is every Muslim's duty, and every Muslim must be ready for this. The reason these issues are being discussed as a conspiracy is because a protest had initially been announced for March 10, as the parliamentary session was set to begin that day. However, the date was later changed to March 13, just one day before Holi. So, we will debate all these conspiracies, coincidences, and experiments, but*

*before we start the discussion, we will show you a report and also inform you that a full panel of guests will be joining us for this debate. Representatives from all sides, all parties will be part of this discussion, but first, let's show you the report.” [Time Stamp: 00:01 – 01:20]*

This framing not only sensationalised the issue but also painted the entire situation as a looming conspiracy, linking the Waqf Amendment Bill protests to violence and unrest, much like the Shaheen Bagh protests. The host's introduction, filled with loaded terms and sweeping generalizations, set a divisive tone, ignoring the broader, legitimate concerns regarding the bill and instead focusing on fearmongering.

It is important to mention that the show also used sensational and provocative tickers. The tickers used in the show, such as "होली करेंगे बदरंग... 'भाईजान' कराएँगे सिर कलम?" (*Will they tarnish Holi... will 'Bhaijaan' have heads severed?*) and "वक्फ पर फसाद... शहर-शहर शाहीन बाग?" (*Riots over Waqf... Shaheen Bagh in every city?*), are deeply problematic because they sensationalize and misrepresent the issue. These provocative statements create fear and suspicion by implying that the protest is a direct threat to Holi, portraying Muslims as violent disruptors. They distort the true purpose of the protest, which was focused on the Waqf Bill, and instead frame it as a broader, baseless conspiracy. Such tickers fuel communal tensions and contribute to division, ignoring the serious consequences of spreading misinformation. [Time Stamp: 00:01 – 01:20]

### **Problematic and misleading tickers used by channel in the show**

The tickers used in the show, such as “होली करेंगे बदरंग... 'भाईजान' कराएँगे सिर कलम? #WaqfVsHoli” (*Will they tarnish Holi... will 'Bhaijaan' have heads severed?*) and “विरोध की तारीख नई..साजिश बही?”, (*The protest date is new... but the conspiracy remains the same?*) sensationalized the entire discussion, misrepresenting the protest and framing it as a threat against Holi. These provocative lines didn't just mislead the viewers but also portrayed the entire Muslim community as being involved in a supposed conspiracy to disrupt Holi. The show exaggerated the situation by using alarming phrases like “वक्फ पर क्लेश...होली पर टारगेट पूरा देश?” (*Conflict over Waqf... entire country targeted on Holi?*) and “शाहीनबाग मॉडल...होली पर करेंगे दंगल?”, (*Shaheen Bagh model... will they create chaos on Holi?*) which fueled unnecessary fear and confusion among the viewers, instead of focusing on the legitimate concerns of the protest.

These tickers reinforced a divisive narrative by suggesting that the protest was more about targeting a national celebration than addressing the Waqf Bill itself. The use of inflammatory language like "सिर कटा लेंगे, वक्फ नहीं छोड़ेंगे!" (*Will get our heads severed, but we will not give up the Waqf!*) further escalated the situation, ignoring the actual reasons behind the protests. By failing to provide any factual context and relying on sensationalism, the show created confusion, manipulated emotions, and ignored the repercussions of such messaging on viewers, potentially stoking divisive narrative against protest call. [Time Stamp: 01:24 – 03:18]

The host, Chandan Singh, begins the debate by introducing the panellists, including BJP spokesperson Shazia Ilmi, VHP leader Pawan Bansal, Hindu religious leader Acharya Vikramaditya, Samajwadi Party spokesperson Prof. Bhuvan Joshi, Islamic scholar Mumtaz Aalam Rizvi, and Junaid Harris.

The first question Chandan Singh directs to panellist Mumtaz Aalam Rizvi focuses on the timing of the protest. He asks, *“I would like to understand, the Parliament session was supposed to begin on the 10th, but the protest was scheduled for the 13th. Is this correct? But the bigger question here is: is it normal to start the protest just one day before Holi? Is this a coincidence? Is there a plan behind this? What’s really going on?”* [Time Stamp: 03:40 – 03:59]

Rizvi responds, *“No, there’s nothing like that. The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board had planned to hold the protest on the 10th and sought permission for that day. However, the police required a 10-day notice for any protest permission. On the 10th, the protest was cancelled by the police. Then, on the 13th, they were given a new date.”*

Suddenly, the host interrupts Rizvi and asks, **“Why not on the 15th or 16th?”** Rizvi responds, **“Chandan Bhai, you should consider that the Parliament is in session on the 13th. If the Parliament were not in session, and the protest had taken place, people would have said it was wrong.”** [Time Stamp: 04:00 – 04:39]

However, seeing that Rizvi’s response does not align with the theme of the show, the host quickly shifts focus and turns to VHP leader Pawan Bansal. Chandan Singh asks him, *“Bansal Sabib, it’s a simple matter that this protest was just about getting permission. There’s no toolkit, no conspiracy, and no one is in danger from the talk of cutting off heads or recalling Shabeen Bagh. Are you all just creating noise for no reason?”* [Time Stamp: 04:42 – 04:54]

Pawan Bansal, attempting to sow doubt about the protest’s timing, responds, *“In this democracy, everyone has the right to protest, no doubt. But right before Holi, in the capital of the country, I say if a protest is held at one location, there’s no problem. But the way an atmosphere is being created, the scenes your reporter showed from Bhopal, and the way people are reacting—it seems that this protest is part of a larger conspiracy to turn Holi into chaos. That’s what it seems to me.”* [Time Stamp: 04:55 – 05:22]

This statement from Pawan Bansal, combined with the host’s support, directs the show toward a sensational “Holi vs Waqf” narrative. The host, seemingly agreeing with Bansal’s view, immediately reinforces the idea of a conspiracy against the Holi festival, using emotionally charged language. As the host responds to the allegation of a conspiracy against Holi, he states, *“At that time, a large number of people who would be there for the Holika Dahan, people who are in a festive mood.”* This remark further compounds the notion that the protest was aimed at disrupting the Holi festival, instead of addressing the protest’s actual concerns.

By doing so, the host turns the discussion away from the factual position regarding the protest’s date and its underlying reasons, and instead shifts the focus to a divisive “us vs them” perspective. The goal seems to be to frame the protest as part of a larger plot to undermine the Hindu festival of Holi, despite no clear evidence or connection. This shift not only distracts from the factual aspects of the protest but also misleading the protest call by creating a false narrative. The theme of the show becomes cantered around this manufactured conflict, with the host and panellists framing the issue in a way that suits a sensational and polarized storyline.

In doing so, the host intentionally steers the debate into a more emotionally charged and divisive direction, focusing on symbolism and sensationalism rather than exploring the real issues at hand.

This approach, by shifting the debate from Waqf-related concerns to a supposed conflict over Holi, works to overshadow the factual details and mislead the audience into focusing on perceived religious divisions.

The host, Chandan Singh, then asked the guest, Junaid Harris, "*We just heard a little while ago that in Bhopal, an elderly person was saying, 'We'll cut off the head.' Arshad Madani Sabib says that Islam here, Muslims here, are being oppressed. Protecting Waqf is the duty and responsibility of all Muslims. Sir, why is an uneducated person or a labourer being provoked in this way? Where does it say in the Waqf regulations that the land of the cemetery will be taken away? This amendment bill...*" **[Time Stamp: 05:41 – 06:05]**

In response, Junaid Harris explained that the issue of law and order is being thoroughly understood by the concerned authorities. As for the actions to be taken on March 13th, following March 10, he stated that the administration had granted permission for this, and in his view, they (AIMPLB) did not request a specific date but were simply granted permission.

The host then responded, "*So you're saying that the administration in Delhi gave permission for the 13th. You are saying this, and because of this, an announcement has been made across the country. It's quite interesting what's coming to light.*" After making this remark, the host abruptly shifted the conversation to another panellist, without fully addressing or allowing Harris to finish discussing the protest's date. This hasty move by the host redirected the debate, diverting it towards the Waqf vs. Holi issue, rather than discussing the topic on factual manner.

It is important to mention that during the CAA/NRC protests, as the world witnessed, Shaheen Bagh became a symbol of peaceful resistance. The key fact here is that there was no violence reported at the Shaheen Bagh protest site in Delhi. However, the host in this debate show deliberately invoked the Shaheen Bagh reference in a conspiratorial context. The statement "जगह-जगह शाहीन बाग बना देंगे" (*We will create Shaheen Bagh everywhere*) was used to symbolically refer to organizing protests against the Waqf Bill, drawing a parallel with how Shaheen Bagh was organized during the CAA/NRC protests. This was not an indication of any conspiracy but rather a reference to a form of peaceful protest that had already been part of India's democratic tradition.

The call for nationwide protests is not a new phenomenon in Indian democracy; protests have been part of the country's political landscape since independence. By citing Shaheen Bagh in such a charged manner, the host intentionally distorts the reality of the situation. The use of this reference, in the context of the Waqf Bill protest, was meant to suggest that the protesters were aiming to create disorder during the Holi festival or even planning a nationwide disruption. This portrayal is both misleading and sensational.

The host's sudden focus on the protest date, which was initially set for March 10 but postponed to March 13, and then again deferred to March 17 due to administrative and festival-related concerns, raises questions. The protest date had no real connection to the Holi festival. The AIMPLB itself had changed the protest date from March 13 to March 17 to avoid any overlap with Holi, which shows a clear effort to ensure the protest did not disrupt the festival.

However, the host, in a rush to fulfil a divisive agenda, chose not to focus on these facts. Instead, the host distorted the debate to create a narrative of fear, portraying the protest as a deliberate

attempt to disrupt the Holi festival and paint the AIMPLB and Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind's protest call as threat against Holi festival. This move was not only unnecessary but also reckless, as it undermined the sensitivity of the issue, turning a legitimate protest into a sensationalized event aimed at creating division and fear among the citizens. The host's handling of the debate was a deliberate attempt to shift the narrative away from the factual position and instead create an atmosphere of suspicion and fear, all for the sake of sensationalism and to drive a divisive agenda.

The host then brought BJP spokesperson Shazia Ilmi into the debate, asking her about the protest date given by the administration just day before Holi. The host framed it as a *"very interesting thing."* During this exchange, Pawan Bansal again reiterated his misleading statement: *"The protest is happening in Delhi, but preparations are being made outside,"* to which the host readily supported, stating, **"Yes, the threat of creating Shaheen Bagh everywhere."**

Ilmi then argued that it was crucial to understand why the protest was happening. She stated, "This protest is being held because poor Muslims are being denied their rights, particularly the land of Waqf. This Waqf land has been systematically handed over to land mafias whose sole purpose is making money and obstructing justice. The Waqf Board is working in opposition to justice by misappropriating these lands, and that's why this protest is happening."

Ilmi continued, *"You mentioned Shaheen Bagh! It is shameful to think that a protest like this was carried out, causing distress to Muslims."* **Instead of challenging her claims, the host affirmed her statement by saying, "Yes."**

Ilmi then went on to make further unsubstantiated claims, stating, "Elderly people, whether grandmothers or grandfathers, were brought here under false pretenses. They were misled into believing that their land was being taken from them, and lies were spread, making it a religious issue. Religious leaders are using this issue to deceive Muslims."

Incredibly, Ilmi repeatedly made these misleading and twisted statements without any interruption, providing a false narrative about the Shaheen Bagh protest. The host made no attempt to correct her or stop her from making these unproven and misleading claims. This is particularly concerning because Ilmi's comments were fully aligned with the narrative the host had already set, effectively supporting the divisive and misleading agenda being pushed throughout the show. **[Time Stamp: 06:06 – 08:15]**

Prof. Bhuwan Joshi responded to Shazia Ilmi's statement about the Waqf mafia by pointing out that images of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Minority Minister Rajbhar are featured on the UP Waqf Board's website. He questioned, *"Are these boards still being run by mafias?"* Before Joshi could finish his point, the host abruptly interrupted, asking, *"What kind of argument is this?"* Joshi, trying to explain his perspective, replied, *"As a law scholar, we know what Article 19(1)(b) is, which allows us to protest peacefully."* The host then cut him off, saying, *"What's the second clause? Please continue, Joshi!"* Joshi continued, *"In the CAA/NRC protests, more than 50 people were killed, and millions of rupees in property were destroyed. Your party was responsible for that. Will you take responsibility for it?"* The host aggressively interrupted again, steering the debate toward his own biased narrative. **[Time Stamp: 08:16 – 10:03]**

The host insisted, *"In the same law, Article 19(1)(b) says that the protest must be without arms and should not have a rioter's nature."* He then aggressively pointed out, **"During the CAA/NRC protests, riots occurred all over the country. Who will take responsibility if the same happens here?"**

The host's behaviour is problematic for several reasons. First, by constantly interrupting Prof. Joshi, the host denied him the opportunity to fully express his argument, disrupting the flow of the discussion. This tactic also allowed the host to manipulate the narrative, steering it toward his biased interpretation. Secondly, the host used to mislead language, implying that any protest could inevitably turn into a riot, without addressing the legitimate concerns of the protesters. His aggressive tone and focus on assigning blame for the CAA/NRC protests diverted attention from the core issue—the Waqf Bill protest. This attempt to create a false equivalence between two entirely different events clouded the actual topic of the debate. Furthermore, by framing the CAA/NRC protests as inherently violent and suggesting that the Waqf Bill protest could lead to similar riots, the host misrepresented the intentions of the Waqf Bill protesters. **[Time Stamp: 08:16 – 10:03]**

Joshi responded by saying, *"When the country's parliament is in session on March 13, and when the administration has granted permission for the protest, who is responsible? The local administration has given permission, so you don't trust the administration?"* However, the host, intent on advancing his biased narrative, interrupted and countered, **"Then why not hold the protest on Eid? Do it on Eid! No, no, it has to happen on the 13th!"**

Joshi repeatedly tried to clarify that the permission was granted by the administration, but the host refused to let him finish his statement. Joshi raised his objection, insisting that the host wasn't allowing him to complete his point. Despite Joshi's attempts to provide a response, the host dismissed his argument because it didn't align with the communal and divisive narrative the host was trying to push. The host's approach clearly indicated that Joshi's statements didn't fit the biased, communal framework he had already set for the show. **[Time Stamp: 10:22 – 10:45]**

During this discussion, the host presented statements from a few individuals in a highly provocative and sensationalized manner, implying that the protesters were planning widespread unrest and conspiracy across the country. The host deliberately painted the call for protest as part of a larger, fabricated conspiracy to discredit the movement and advance his own communal bias.

The host aired tickers on the screen with inflammatory sub-titles such as, "शाहीन बाग वाली धमकी: सरकार वक्फ बिल वापस ले," (*Shabeen Bagh threat: Government should withdraw the Waqf bill*) "CAA से बड़ा इंकलाब होगा," (*A bigger revolution than CAA will happen*) "NRC से बड़ा विरोध होगा," (*There will be a bigger protest than NRC*) "एक शाहीन बाग दिल्ली में था, गली गली में शाहीन बाग होगा." (*There was one Shabeen Bagh in Delhi, now every street will have a Shabeen Bagh*)

These tickers were not only biased but also designed to create panic, implying that the Waqf Bill protest was a precursor to violence and social unrest. By drawing parallels to the Shaheen Bagh protests, which were widely associated with civil disorder during the CAA/NRC protests, the host further stigmatised the protestors and portrayed them as instigators of a larger, potentially violent

conspiracy. This narrative was clearly intended to mislead the audience, creating a false equivalence between peaceful protest and violent chaos.

While displaying these statements in different manner and context giving panellists free rein to make statements that aligned with his biased narrative. He did not make any effort to challenge or fact-check the claims being made. The host limited the speaking time of panellists who did not support the Waqf Bill amendment. However, he did not impose any such restrictions on panellists supporting the Waqf Bill, including Pawan Bansal, Acharya Vikramaditya, and Shazia Ilmi. This selective control over speaking time further revealed the host's biased approach, giving undue freedom to those who aligned with his narrative while restricting those who expressed dissenting views. his manipulation not only undermines the integrity of the debate but also serves to mislead the audience by providing a platform for one-sided commentary that feeds into a divisive agenda.

At one point, the host asked Acharya Vikramaditya, *"Isn't it inciting by saying 'the land of your ancestors will be taken'? Isn't it inflammatory when people are talking about beheading? Aren't these provocative statements? Please answer, Vikramaditya Ji."* The host's questioning here is designed to provoke a reaction by suggesting that the protestors are engaging in violent rhetoric. However, this is misleading because it oversimplifies and distorts the nature of the protest, which was intended to address concerns regarding the Waqf Bill, not to incite violence. The host's selective use of language is an attempt to create a false equivalence between the peaceful protest and previous instances of violence, like the CAA/NRC protests.

When Acharya Vikramaditya responded, stating that *"This is not an experiment, this is being organized in a planned manner, an attempt is being made to disrupt the country completely. Last time, PFI's money was involved in the CAA/NRC protests, and this time, it will be the same,"* the host allowed this statement to go unchallenged, despite it lacking factual backing. This type of narrative casts unwarranted aspersions on the protest and attempts to link it to external, unsubstantiated forces, such as the PFI (Popular Front of India) the legitimate concerns of the Waqf Bill protestors.

The host's failure to restrain from making misleading claims and support for a one-sided narrative not only violates the principles of balanced journalism but also misguides the public into believing that the protest was fuelled by external conspiracies or a desire for violence. **[Time Stamp: 10:50 – 11:30]**

In between the doing this, in deliberate manner and communal manner sub-heads aired on the show and statements of few individuals as the call for entire Muslim community as showed that; जरूरत पड़ने पर हम जान भी दे देंगे – मुस्लिम, जरूरत पड़ी तो शाहीन बाग बना देंगे – मुस्लिम, हर जगह शाहीन बाग बनाया जायेगा – मुस्लिम etc. *(If needed, we will give our lives – Muslims. If required, we will create Shabeen Bagh – Muslims. Shabeen Bagh will be created everywhere – Muslims)* **[Time stamp: 11:47 – 12:10]**





Further, the given tickers such as “वक्फ के नाम पर सिर कटा लेने की धमकी क्यों?”, (*Why the threat of beheading in the name of Waqf?*), “वक्फ संशोधन के खिलाफ प्रदर्शन होली से पहले क्यों?” (*Why the protest against the Waqf amendment before Holi?*), “वक्फ संशोधन बिल से मुस्लिमों को क्यों ऐतराज?” (*Why do Muslims object to the Waqf amendment bill?*), and “हर कानून के खिलाफ भीड़ जुटाने वाला षड्यंत्र कब तक?” (*For how long will the conspiracy to gather crowds against every law continue?*) are deeply problematic because they sensationalize and polarize an important issue without providing factual clarity or context. These statements frame the topic in a way that stirs fear, outrage, and confusion among viewers, rather than promoting understanding. By focusing on inflammatory and leading questions, the show manipulates public perception, potentially inciting hatred. [Time Stamp: 12:32 – 12:51]



Such an approach is particularly concerning because it disregards the nuances of the Waqf Amendment Bill, its actual implications, and the factual reasons behind the protests by Muslim organizations like Jamiat and AIMPLB. Instead of fostering a balanced, informed discussion, the show amplifies provocative and controversial narratives that lack evidence. This kind of reporting feeds into existing biases, misguiding the audience and stifling meaningful dialogue. The media's role is to inform the public objectively, yet in this case, the host's communal agenda overshadows the truth.

It is crucial to point out that the host, after orchestrating the show in a deeply biased and communal manner, framed the narrative around "Waqf vs. Holi," even using that theme as a hashtag. This itself is a clear attempt to stir divisiveness, playing on communal sentiments. To compound the issue, the tickers displayed on screen, such as "13 मार्च ही क्यों चुना?" - "10 मार्च से संसद के बजट सत्र का दूसरा राउंड, सत्र में वक्फ संशोधन बिल पेश होने की संभावना, संसोधन बिल के खिलाफ मुसलमानों का आक्रोश," (*Why was March 13th chosen?* - "The second round of Parliament's budget session starts on March 10th, the Waqf amendment bill is likely to be introduced in the session, and there is Muslim outrage against the amendment bill)) not only misrepresented the facts but created unnecessary confusion. These tickers, which raised questions about the timing of the protest and the bill's introduction, contradicted each other and ignored the context provided by the panellists who were opposing the Waqf Bill. [Time Stamp 13:09 – 13:43]



If the show itself had already stated that the protest was scheduled for March 13 with reason above stated and can be seen in the tickers, then the earlier sensationalist sub-headlines and tickers questioning the timing only served to muddle the issue further. Instead of engaging with the real concerns surrounding the bill, the host's focus remained on promoting a divisive agenda, ignoring the facts provided by the panellists. This lack of attention to the factual context and the unnecessary sensationalism in the tickers undermined the opportunity for a balanced and informed discussion.

The show was conducted in a highly insensitive and superficial manner, without any coherent theme other than to push a biased narrative. By failing to focus on the legitimate issues at hand, the host not only disregarded the facts but also diverted the conversation towards inflammatory and divisive way, making it clear that the intention was not to inform, but to stoke fear and confusion among the viewers.

### Panellist Bansal threatens Rizvi, Host remains mute spectator

In the middle of the show, while the discussion was centred on CAA/NRC, panellist Pawan Bansal openly threatened Rizvi regarding the Waqf protest, saying, "मैं कहता हूँ कि अगर होली के दिन उत्पात किया! मैं चैलेंज कर रहा हूँ अगर होली के दिन उत्पात किया, अगर होली के दिन उत्पात किया! समझ लेना बहुत बुरा हस्र होगा." (*I'm saying, if you create chaos on Holi! I'm challenging, if you create chaos on Holi, if you create chaos on Holi! Understand that the consequences will be very severe*). **When Rizvi objected, urging Bansal not to issue threats, the host, rather than stepping in, remained a mute spectator, failing to uphold any responsibility as a moderator.**

This silence was particularly troubling because Rizvi is linked to a specific community and the Waqf Bill, making him a direct target of Bansal's threats. Even after Rizvi voiced his opposition, Bansal repeated, "ये दुस्साहस मत करना, ये दुस्साहस मत करना," (*Don't you dare do this, don't you dare do this*)

and continued questioning the validity of the protest, saying, “क्यों प्रदर्शन कर रहे हैं, कानून में क्या कमी है? आप कितना भी कुछ कर लीजिये कानून बन कर रहेगा” (*Why are you protesting, what is lacking in the law? No matter what you do, the law will be enacted*). **Despite these inflammatory remarks, the host did nothing to intervene.**

By failing to take action, the host not only allowed the situation to escalate but also failed to maintain decorum, allowing an aggressive, communal narrative to dominate the discussion. This lack of intervention was a clear failure of his duty to ensure a fair, balanced, and respectful conversation. [Time Stamp: 20:10 – 21:05]

The show can be viewed here:

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/live/cQygfDiBkLA>

### What does the show entails?

In concluding the complaint, the "Taal Thok Ke" debate show exhibited a pattern of deliberate bias and inflammatory rhetoric, designed to misrepresent the Waqf Amendment Bill protest and incite communal tensions. The show opened with sensationalist tickers (00:01-01:20), such as "होली करेंगे बदरंग... 'भाईजान' कराएँगे सिर कलम?" (*Will they tarnish Holi... will 'Bhaijaan' have heads severed?*) and "वक्फ पर फसाद... शहर-शहर शाहीन बाग?" (*Riots over Waqf... Shaheen Bagh in every city?*), immediately framing the protest as a violent threat to Holi. Further tickers like "होली करेंगे बदरंग... 'भाईजान' कराएँगे सिर कलम? #WaqfVsHoli" (*Will they tarnish Holi... will 'Bhaijaan' have heads severed?*) and "विरोध की तारीख नई.. साजिश वही?" (*The protest date is new... but the conspiracy remains the same?*) (01:24-03:18) reinforced this narrative, portraying the Muslim community as a collective conspirator.

Host Chandan Singh's initial questioning of Mumtaz Aalam Rizvi (03:40-04:39) focused on the protest's timing, implying a malicious intent to disrupt Holi. When Rizvi explained the administrative reasons for the date change, Singh swiftly shifted to Pawan Bansal (04:42-05:22), who alleged a "larger conspiracy to turn Holi into chaos," a claim Singh actively supported. This established the show's "Holi vs. Waqf" narrative. Singh's subsequent questioning of Junaid Harris (05:41-06:05) highlighted isolated inflammatory statements, while downplaying the protest's core concerns. The host's deliberate invocation of Shaheen Bagh in a conspiratorial context further distorted the protest's image.

Shazia Ilmi's unsubstantiated claims about "land mafias" and the manipulation of protesters (06:06-08:15) were left unchallenged, aligning with the show's bias. When Prof. Bhuvan Joshi attempted to counter Ilmi's claims and address the CAA/NRC protests, Singh repeatedly interrupted him (08:16-10:03), steering the debate towards his own narrative. Joshi's attempts to clarify the administration's role in granting protest permission were dismissed by Singh (10:22-10:45), who insisted on a communal framing of the issue.

The show continued to broadcast inflammatory tickers and statements (10:50-11:30, 11:47-12:10, 12:32-12:51), such as "शाहीन बाग वाली धमकी: सरकार वक्फ बिल वापस लें," (*Shaheen Bagh threat: Government should withdraw the Waqf Bill*) and "वक्फ के नाम पर सिर कटा लेने की धमकी क्यों?" (*Why the threat of beheading in the name of Waqf?*), further sensationalizing the issue. Acharya Vikramaditya's unsubstantiated

claims about PFI involvement were also left unchallenged. The show's focus on "Waqf vs. Holi" (13:09-13:43), coupled with contradictory tickers, demonstrated a clear intent to stoke communal tensions.

During the debate, Pawan Bansal issued direct threats to Rizvi (Time Stamp: 20:10-21:05), stating that any disruption during Holi would have "very bad consequences." Singh's failure to intervene highlighted his bias and lack of impartiality.

The host's failure to intervene when panellist Pawan Bansal openly threatened Rizvi was a clear dereliction of his duty. As Bansal issued provocative threats, including "अगर होली के दिन उत्पात किया, समझ लेना बहुत बुरा हस्र होगा," (*If you create chaos on Holi, understand that the consequences will be very severe*) the host remained silent, allowing the situation to escalate. Despite Rizvi's objections, the host failed to moderate the exchange or protect the integrity of the discussion. By not stepping in, the host not only condoned Bansal's aggressive behaviour but also allowed a targeted, inflammatory narrative to persist, undermining the role of a fair, impartial moderator. This negligence set a dangerous precedent for the discourse.

The show "Taal Thok Ke" violated journalistic ethics and broadcast standards through its biased and inflammatory content. Host Chandan Singh consistently steered the debate towards a divisive "Holi vs. Waqf" narrative, misrepresenting the Waqf Amendment Bill protest. The use of sensationalized tickers and unsubstantiated claims, coupled with the host's selective questioning and interruptions, created a hostile environment. The host failed to maintain impartiality, allowing panellists to make inflammatory statements and threats without challenge.

This deliberate manipulation of information and the promotion of communal discord warrant a formal complaint, demanding a review of the show's content and adherence to broadcasting guidelines. The channel must be held accountable for its role in disseminating misinformation and fuelling communal tensions. The host's consistent biased actions, and the allowance of threats to a panellist are clear violations of ethical broadcasting.

## **Violations**

### **The Violations of NBDSA principles:**

Following are the codes of ethics and principles of self-regulation as laid out by the NBDSA that have been violated by India TV:

#### **FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES**

- 1) Professional electronic journalists should accept and understand that they operate as trustees of public and should, therefore, make it their mission to seek the truth and to report it fairly with integrity and independence. Professional journalists should stand fully accountable for their actions.
- 4) Broadcasters shall, in particular, ensure that they do not select news for the purpose of either promoting or hindering either side of any controversial public issue. News shall not be selected or designed to promote any particular belief, opinion or desires of any interest group.

5) The fundamental purpose of dissemination of news in a democracy is to educate and inform the people of the happenings in the country, so that the people of the country understand significant events and form their own conclusions.

6) Broadcasters shall ensure a full and fair presentation of news as the same is the fundamental responsibility of each news channel. Realising the importance of presenting all points of view in a democracy, the broadcasters should, therefore, take responsibility in ensuring that controversial subjects are fairly presented, with time being allotted fairly to each point of view. Besides, the selection of items of news shall also be governed by public interest and importance based on the significance of these items of news in a democracy.

## **PRINCIPLES OF SELF REGULATION**

**2. Ensuring neutrality:** TV News channels must provide for neutrality by offering equality for all affected parties, players and actors in any dispute or conflict to present their point of view. Though neutrality does not always come down to giving equal space to all sides (news channels shall strive to give main view points of the main parties) news channels must strive to ensure that allegations are not portrayed as fact and charges are not conveyed as an act of guilt.

### **9. Racial & Religious Harmony:**

#### **9.1 Racial and religious stereotyping should be avoided.**

9.2 Caution should be exercised in reporting content which denigrates or is likely to offend the sensitivities of any racial or religious group or that may create religious intolerance or disharmony.

## **Specific Guidelines for Anchors conducting Programmes including Debates**

The Anchors/Presenters/Journalists/Editors should:

a. Not make any derisive or derogatory statements about individuals, communities or religious beliefs and practices while reporting, commenting, analysing or debating on any issue or topic in any programme/s including debates.

b. All communally inflammable statements/declarations are prohibited as per the Code of Ethics and therefore should not be uttered during the programmes. Members are aware that such utterances are subject to penalty under the News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Regulations.

c. While deciding panellists for debates, Anchors, Editors and Broadcasters/Publishers should avoid inviting fringe elements, extremists and separatists who are known for espousing rabid/fanatic views/opinions thereby giving them an opportunity to air and spread their divisive and provocative views.

d. Caution, inform, guide, advise and brief the panellists (either by e-mail or personally), prior to participating in a debate, to refrain from making any provocative and divisive statements and bring to the attention of the panellists the Code of Ethics and the

Guidelines issued by NBDSA. These emails, if any, should be kept on record and may be produced before NBDSA in case of any future complaint/s.

e. Advise and warn the panellists from making provocative and divisive statements during the debates. In case of non-compliance, mute the panellist/s if he/she continues to make such statements which may incite hatred amongst communities or result in racial and religious stereotyping or which denigrates or creates religious intolerance or disharmony.

f. Ensure that panel discussions and /or the programmes including debates do not become a platform to encourage or expound extremist/divisive views or spread falsehood or fake facts about individuals, communities, religious beliefs and practices.

g. Refrain from using religion-linked adjectives in a pejorative manner and refrain from any character assassination/attacks whatsoever on the basis of religion, political affiliations, prejudices etc. in any programme/s including debates.

h. Avoid pushing any communal agenda during a programme including a debate. Anchors must ensure that they do not take any sides and do not harass or harangue panellists to force any admission, opinion or comment.

It may be noted that adding a Disclaimer to any programme including debates does not absolve Editorial personnel, Anchors, Journalists and Producers of their responsibility in case of violation of the Code of Ethics and the Guidelines. Editorial Policy of a particular channel cannot be a defence to a breach of the Code of Ethics and the Guidelines.

The channel also stands in violation of **the Cable Television Network Rules, whereby the programme Code under Rule 6 states that**

(1) No programme should be carried in the cable service which: -

(c) Contains attack on religions or communities or visuals or words contemptuous of religious groups or which promote communal attitudes;

(e) Is likely to encourage or incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promote-anti-national attitudes;

(h) Contains anything affecting the integrity of the Nation;

Further, the inflammatory and unverified content of the show amounts to inciteful, hate speech which is a punishable offence under various sections of the **Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, 2023 (BNS)**:

**Sections 196** [promotion of enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony];

**298** [deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs];

**302** [uttering, words, etc., with deliberate intent to wound the religious feelings of any person]; and

**356 (1) and (2)** [publication or circulation of any statement, rumour or report causing public mischief and enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes].

On January 13, while hearing a batch of petitions seeking action against hate speech the bench of Justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna (Supreme Court of India) said that the news anchors who promote or indulge in hate speech should be punished by imposing a fine and taken off air. The bench also said that the news media must realise that they occupy a position of great strength and what they are saying impacts the whole country. “They should realise that they have no right to speak their minds whichever way they want,” said Justice Joseph. The bench also said that news channels were creating a rift in the society. During a hearing in September 2022, in the Hon’ble Supreme Court, a Justice of the Court (Justice Joseph) had expressly stated that TV channels were using hate to increase their ratings.

From the multiple complaints that we have raised before NBDSA over the years against the India Tv channel, it is evident that certain news channels are always seeking a communal agenda to increase their viewership. Controversial and communal topics attracts viewer attention as it is a matter of debate and thus, these channels tend to pick up any news that can be given a communal turn and sometimes even create a news point to further their divisive agenda.

In the case of ***Amish Devgan vs. Union of India and others*** [Writ Petition (Criminal) No. 160 of 2020 decided on December 7, 2020], the Supreme Court held thus,

*“The unity and integrity of the nation cannot be overlooked and slighted, as the acts that ‘promote’ or are ‘likely’ to ‘promote’ divisiveness, alienation and schematism do directly and indirectly impinge on the diversity and pluralism, and when they are with the objective and intent to cause public disorder or to demean dignity of the targeted groups, they have to be dealt with as per law....Such threats not only insidiously weaken virtue and superiority of diversity, but cut-back and lead to demands depending on the context and occasion, for suppression of freedom to express and speak on the ground of reasonableness. Freedom and rights cannot extend to create public disorder or armour those who challenge integrity and unity of the country or promote and incite violence.”*

*“In this context, it is necessary to draw a distinction between ‘free speech’ which includes the right to comment, favour or criticise government policies; and ‘hate speech’ creating or spreading hatred against a targeted community or group....The object of criminalising the latter type of speech is to protect the dignity (as explained above) and to ensure political and social equality between different identities and groups regardless of caste, creed, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, linguistic preference etc.”*

In ***Pravasi Bhalai Sangathan v. Union of India and ors.***, reported in AIR 2014 SC 1591, while hearing a plea urged in public interest that the existing laws of the country are not sufficient to cope with the menace of "hate speeches", had the occasion to consider what a "hate speech" is. The court stated thus,

*"7. Hate speech is an effort to marginalise individuals based on their membership in a group. Using expression that exposes the group to hatred, hate speech seeks to delegitimise group members in the eyes of the majority, reducing their social standing and acceptance within society. Hate speech, therefore, rises beyond causing distress to individual group members. It can have a social impact. Hate speech lays the groundwork for later, broad attacks on vulnerable that can range from discrimination, to ostracism, segregation, deportation, violence and, in the most extreme cases, to genocide. Hate speech also impacts a protected*



*group's ability to respond to the substantive ideas under debate, thereby placing a serious barrier to their full participation in our democracy."*

If the channel truly valued the principles of secularism and communal harmony, it would uphold these values in its reporting. However, it is evident that, in blatant disregard for these constitutional principles, the channel has aggressively promoted an anti-minority agenda. By portraying the Muslim community in a suspicious light and amplifying Islamophobic rhetoric, the channel has contributed to harmful and divisive discourse.

During the broadcast, the host Chandan Singh and guest like Pawan Bansal made statements that directly incited fear and division and painted the protest in a conspired manner against the Hindu festival. Singh's failure to challenge Bansal's inflammatory comments—such as framing the protest against the Waqf Amendment Bill as part of a “larger conspiracy to turn Holi into chaos”—created an atmosphere ripe for communal divide. Bansal's assertion that the protest was an attempt to disrupt Holi and create violence undermines the essence of pluralism and posits a dangerous narrative that pits communities against one another. Shazia Ilmi's unsubstantiated claims about “land mafias” and manipulation of protesters further exacerbated this climate of hostility, reducing complex societal issues to a binary conflict.

Such rhetoric not only deepens the societal divide but also legitimizes aggression towards the Muslim community, painting them as a monolithic threat. The repeated framing of protest date as a conspiracy against the Holi festival, promoting a culture of mistrust and animosity between two community. By allowing these harmful narratives to flourish unchallenged, the channel not only fails in its duty as a responsible media outlet but also endangers the very fabric of communal harmony in the nation.

We are sure that a channel such as yours is aware of the recent matters pending in the Hon'ble Supreme Court, wherein specifically the role of television channels and anchors has come under sharp questioning. In view of this, it is in your best interest to remove the above-mentioned content from all social media accounts of your channel and your own website and issue a public apology for the communal reportage. In the event we do not receive a satisfactory response from you, we will be compelled to submit a complaint to the NBDSA. You are also put on notice that failure on your part to satisfy the complainants with an apology on your news channel may result in legal consequences for your channel at the appropriate forums, at your risk of costs. We also urge more sensitive and responsible coverage of issues in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Nandan Maluste, CJP President

Teesta Setalvad, CJP Secretary