

06-29-'20 17:38 FROM-

T-041 P0001/0003 F-073



भारत का हाई कमीशन, औटवा
High Commission of India, Ottawa

No.OTT/POL/307/1/2020

June 26, 2020

The High Commission of the Republic of India in Ottawa presents its compliments to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), and has the honour to state that the attention of the High Commission has been drawn to the recent live broadcasts by Montreal-based media channel PTN24 through its broadcast on television and placing the broadcast material on its Facebook page (<https://bit.ly/2MQf4yX>) on April 26, 2020. PTN24 is a 24x7 television channel is headquartered at 8084, Avenue Champagenur, Montreal, QC, H3N 2K5 and has an office in Mississauga, ON. As per the information available in public, PTN24 has "Religious programming, world politics, Canadian Politics, News and Talk shows in Punjabi language."

The two and half hour program mentioned above was advertised through social media of various religious groups including the President of Guru Nanak Darbar LaSalle on Facebook as the annual funeral service for militants killed during terrorism in Punjab and 'Sahaj Path' (defined as the reading of Sikh holy book Guru Granth Sahib). The programme broadcast by PTN24 convened a number of speakers who addressed the event after the Sahaj Path ended. The speeches delivered were full of hate, sought to glorify violence and threatened people with death.

Apart from malicious anti-India propaganda indulged in by almost all the speakers, the speeches made by Mr. Harbhajan Singh and Mr. Santokh Singh Khela deserve special mention for their vitriolic and hateful content. While the complete speech is objectionable, some parts of the speech are particularly obnoxious as they seek to glorify violence and claim that Sikh Gurus were aiding terrorists in their mission. Referring to the incident in June 1984 whereby Indian security forces had launched an operation to evict terrorists hiding in Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar, Punjab, India, Mr. Harbhajan Singh said that commandos who were being para-dropped by helicopters were shot dead by 'them' (terrorists) in mid-air itself. He added that the reason 'they' were able to kill commandoes with such accuracy was because they constantly recited God's name while pressing the trigger. The speech appeared to be an attempt at portraying terrorists as 'brave' and at justifying and glorifying the killings. The terrorists in Punjab committed huge transgressions and were responsible for deaths of countless innocents including a large number of Sikhs. A large number of Canadians of

06-29-'20 17:38 FROM-

T-041 P0002/0003 F-073

Indian heritage, including those from Sikh faith, feel hurt by the glorification of violence under the garb of religion as was done by this speaker.

The other speaker in the programme, Mr. Santokh Singh Khela made open threats like - "we will kill perpetrators of injustice" as "some people had done in the past". He cited examples of Ranjit Singh who was convicted of murdering Gurbachan Singh in 1980; Beant Singh and Satwant Singh who assassinated former Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi; and Dilawar Singh who was the suicide bomber who killed former Chief Minister of Punjab province, Mr. Beant Singh. Mr. Khela said that the victims were perpetrators of injustice and hence the killers had to kill them. The comments of Mr. Santokh Singh Khela are abhorrent and would constitute an offence under section 264.1(1) of the Canadian Criminal Code. Attention is drawn to the fact that Mr. Santokh Singh Khela was convicted in May 1986 of planning to blow up Air India flight 112 from New York City. He was incarcerated for 6 years before the conviction was overturned on technical grounds.

These speeches are shocking and it is disconcerting to see that TV channel PTN24 not only decided to broadcast them but keep such content on its Facebook page as well where it is freely accessible by anyone, including minor children. The channel made no efforts to show or provide an alternate view or provide any opportunity to groups that oppose this glorification of violence to balance the narrative. The decision of the channel to do so does not appear unintentional. One of the speakers, during the show, profusely thanked the owner/manager of the channel, Mr. Sukhwinder Singh Chandi for providing constant support to them.

The transmission of above program violates Canadian laws against hate speech promoting violence and is against the policy laid down by CRTC in general and *Religious Broadcasting Policy* in particular. The CRTC has constantly stressed that 'The Broadcasting Act' (Act) mandates that all material broadcast should be of high standard. The Canadian Broadcasting Policy as enumerated in the Act, also mandates that the programming should "reflect Canadian attitudes" and "contribute to shared national consciousness and identity". The inflammatory speeches made during the program, glorification of violence and threats of annihilation surely do not fall under either of them and also cannot be considered as 'freedom of speech for political expression.' The above program fails to have adhered to standards prescribed by CRTC. The channel also falls short on providing a "reasonable opportunity for the public to be exposed to differing points of view" as mandated under the Canadian Broadcasting Act and CRTC's directions on 'Importance of Balance' under its *Religious Broadcasting Policy*. The channel also seems to have violated 'Guidelines on ethics for religious programming' which enjoins that religious programming "must demonstrate tolerance, integrity and social responsibility."

06-29-'20 17:39 FROM-

T-041 P0003/0003 F-073

While the liberal laws in Canada and the openness of its society is admirable, for a program of this nature to be broadcast from Canadian soil constitutes not only abuse of Canadian hospitality but also of its impressive democratic system and laws.

The High Commission of India shall appreciate if the esteemed Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) could initiate action under Canadian laws against PTN24 to ensure that such programmes are not telecast in future.

The High Commission of the Republic of India in Ottawa avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the CRTC the assurances of its highest consideration.



Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission
[Attention: Secretary-General, CRTC]
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2.
[Fax 819-994-0218]

Copy to:

Global Affairs Canada
[Mr. David Hartman, Director-General,
South Asia Division]
125, Sussex Drive
Ottawa.