Twitter Thread by Indian Rwanda Radio



Indian Rwanda Radio
@IND_RwandaRadio



Nearly a year ago, the Tablighi Jamaat controversy took over India's media. Around 3,500 foreign nationals had visited India to attend the Tablighi Jamaat event at the Nizamuddin Markaz Mosque in Delhi.

With the lockdown being announced on March 24, 2020, several attendees had moved to different parts of the country to attend smaller gatherings in local mosques.

Around 960 foreign nationals were held at quarantine and in states like UP, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Karnataka, etc. were sent straight to prison.

There was an outpour of Anti-Muslim bigotry in much of Indian news media with this event where it ramped up its demonisation of the community.

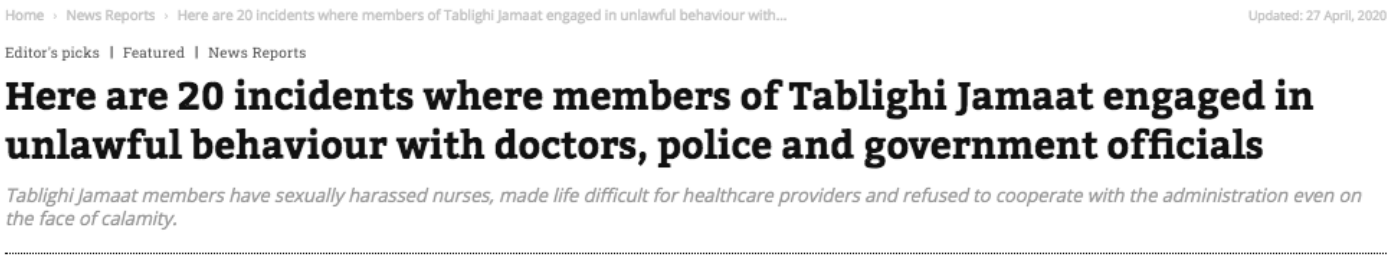
For weeks, the attendees of the Tablighi Jamaat event were named the "super-spreaders" of COVID and in several cases, Maulana Mohammad Saad was called a terrorist and "the maulana of death".

The Tablighis were bigotedly and unjustifiably blamed for aggravating the COVID situation in the country leading to egregious effects on many Muslims across the country.

On March 31 2020 during his news time show called "Bindaas Bol" Suresh Chavhanke of Sudharshan News called the Tablighis "human bombs carrying coronavirus" and proclaimed that what they did was, in fact, "corona jihad".



OpIndia wrote several articles on how the attendees of the event had engaged in unlawful and unethical behaviour by spitting on people, attacking doctors and nurses, etc. All of these reports were later fact-checked as being fake news formulated to criminalise Muslims.


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Here are 20 incidents where members of Tablighi Jamaat engaged in unlawful behaviour with doctors, police and government officials

Tablighi Jamaat members have sexually harassed nurses, made life difficult for healthcare providers and refused to cooperate with the administration even on the face of calamity.

On his show, DNA, Zee News editor Sudhir Chaudhary, accused the Tablighi Jamaat of lying and betraying the whole nation. He also tweeted aerial images and videos of the Nizamuddin Markaz Mosque by making it look like the prime source of COVID cases in India.



Arnab Goswami of Republic TV asked whether this event was a conspiracy to turn Delhi into Italy and questioned the loyalty of the attendees to the nation.



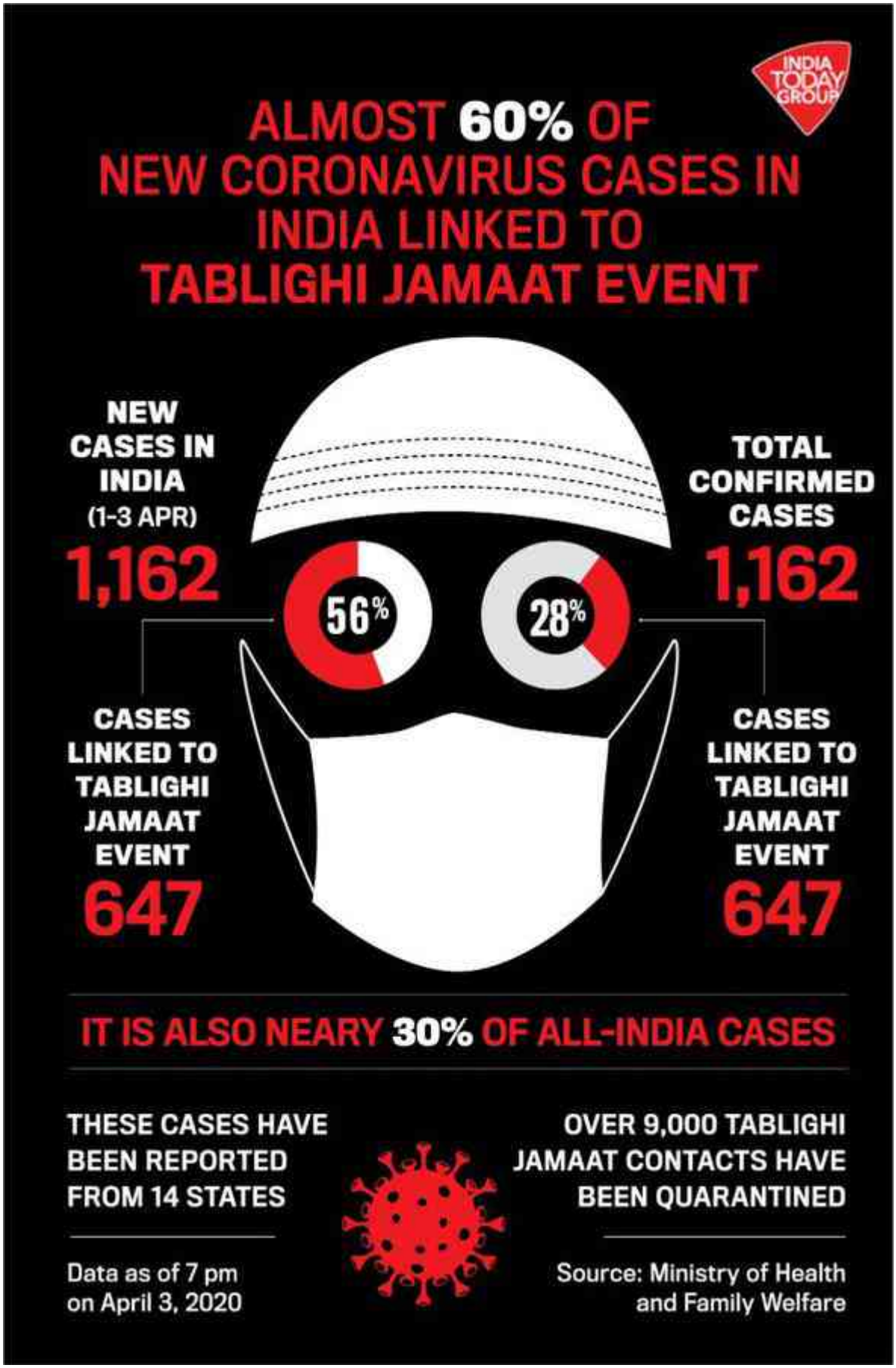
Zee News came back into its communal frenzy on April 2 2020 when Aman Chopra, during his show Taal Thok Ke, crafted a new form of Jihad known as “spitting Jihad” which was aimed at targeting the attendees of the event.



Rahul Kanwal’s infamous sting on India Today, a channel that normally postures itself to be liberal, accused two Madarassas in Delhi in Noida of hiding their children in violation of lockdown and linking their teachers to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation.



He called this special investigation “The Madrassa Hotspot”. India Today also published a poster to analyse the COVID statistics in the country which was evidently loaded with communal symbols meant to demonize Muslims.



It’s nearly been a year since the media trail of the Tablighi Jamaat. Using the discourse of "COVID nationalism" dominant across the globe with a twist of home-grown Hindutva-oriented Islamophobia, this media trial went on for months.

Countrywide, there were cases of Muslims facing discrimination at the hands of their neighbours and government officials because of the numerous communally hate-filled stings and reports by the Indian Media.

In December 2020, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Arun Kumar Garg acquitted the 36 remaining foreigners from 14 countries of all charges in the case which involved Section 3 of Epidemic Diseases Act, Sections 51/58 (1) of Disaster Management Act, 2005, and Sections 188/269 of the..

…Indian Penal Code.
A year on, in terms of the prejudiced origin stories of COVID in the country, not much has changed. Several media houses still stand by their narratives that the Tablighi Jamaat attendees were the source of the pandemic in the country.

Large-scale damage has already been done.