Pudhiya Thalaimurai News Channel Case

What is the issue?

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- Recently, Tamil Nadu government filed a case against the Tamil news channel “Pudhiya Thalaimurai” for allegedly promoting enmity in one of its programs.
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- Considering the circumstances of the case, this is nothing short of a direct attack on press freedom and democratic right to an opinion.
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What is the case about?

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- “Pudhiya Thalaimurai” (PT) had organised a ‘discussion forum’ on the continuing protracted protests in Tamil Nadu in the recent past.
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- Subsequently, Tamil Nadu government slapped a case against the channel under for “promoting enmity between groups”.
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- The cause for the action was certain remarks made by a couple of the TV channel’s guests who had participated in the aforementioned program.
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- Although it was some sections of the audience that was disruptive, FIRs were filed against two participants – whose remarks were clear not inflammatory.
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- Notably, the FIR also included in its ambit, the program’s anchor and the management of PT channel.
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- More shockingly, the FIR was filed even before the roundtable discussion on the role of protests was aired.
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- A sensitive issue like the current string of protests is bound to invoke polarising views, but the crackdown on voicing opinions is an extremely bad

precedent.
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Is the TN government acting in a vindictive fashion?

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- The state government-owned “Arasu Cable TV” network services about 1 crore households in Tamil Nadu and is a major TV broadcaster.
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- In a clearly targeted and vindictive action, PT was suddenly pushed from the 124th to the 499th slot on the “Arasu Network”.
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- In some regions, the channel was also removed from the Tamil cluster of channels and regrouped with those in other languages.
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- For subscribers who are linked to Arasu via analogue, the channel has become simply unavailable in many areas.
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- Significantly, a couple of other channels too were subjected to such actions in the past, thereby establishing a clear trend.
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How does the future look?

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- There have been apprehensions that the State government is using its domination of the distribution space to crack down on news channels.
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- The severity of crack down on PT has led many to believe that it is clearly intended to send out a larger message to all media houses.
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Source: The Hindu

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