

ONLY BY EMAIL

February 18, 2026

Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade Email: jeetghorpade@gmail.com	Ms. Annie Compliance Officer NBDSA Zee Media Corporation Ltd. No 19, Film City, Sector 16A, Noida – 201301 Email: legal@zeemedia.com
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Complaint (No.164) dated 13.11.2024 filed by Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade against a broadcast titled 'Fake Transgenders Arrested in Hyderabad' aired on Zee Telugu on 09.11.2024

Attached please find Order dated February 17, 2026 passed by News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority.

Regards



Shreya Rastogi
For & on behalf of NBDSA

News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority

Order No. 210 (2026)

Complainant: Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade

Channel: Zee Telugu

Programme: 'Fake Transgenders Arrested in Hyderabad'

Date of Broadcast: 09.11.2024

Since the complainant was not satisfied with the response of the broadcaster, the complaint was escalated to the second level of redressal, i.e., NBDSA on 26.11.2024.

Complaint dated 13.11.2024

In the impugned report, images of trans women unrelated to this case were used. The complainant questioned where the channel obtained these images and why they were used, given that the report did not concern the private citizens featured in them.

The report stated that the arrested trans women were fake. The complainant stated that this assertion was blatantly transphobic, unverified, and inaccurate. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in *NALSA v Union of India* and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, had granted trans persons the right to self-identification.

The complainant asked on what basis the broadcaster said they were fake, what steps it had taken to verify their gender identity before declaring them fake, whether it had spoken to any of them, and whether they had confessed to being cisgender men pretending to be trans persons. If the assertion is based on an FIR stating that they are fake, please provide a copy of the FIR. He further questioned the broadcaster whether it had spoken with any trans community leaders or the accused persons to verify the accuracy of its reporting or the allegations in the FIR.

The broadcaster had violated several NBDSA rules, including, but not limited to, Accuracy, Objectivity, Neutrality, Privacy, Defamation, and Guidelines on reporting issues concerning the LGBTQ+ community.

Reply dated 26.11.2024 from the broadcaster

The broadcaster acknowledged the receipt of the complaint, wherein various allegations had been raised regarding the content published concerning the arrest of eleven members from the transgender community in Cyberabad, Hyderabad. At the outset, it denied and disputed all allegations, insinuations, and averments made in the said complaint, which were baseless, false, misleading, and frivolous.

It asserted that the impugned broadcast did not contravene any guidelines, Code of Ethics, or self-regulation principles. The program in question was produced in a

neutral, objective, and impartial manner. The complaint appears to be an unfounded attempt to suppress the legitimate functioning of a responsible media entity.

With respect to the contents of the program, it is submitted that the news concerning the arrest of eleven members from the transgender community for inappropriate actions and creating public nuisance, following raids conducted in various areas of the Cyberabad Commissionerate, was factually accurate and based on credible sources, including local law enforcement agencies. The program was aired solely to present these facts, with no intention to defame, belittle, or demean the transgender community.

It is unequivocally stated that the program did not seek to harm the reputation of the transgender community but rather to report the actions of specific individuals who, by engaging in disruptive behaviour, could potentially cause harm to the dignity of genuine transgender persons. The program was intended to inform the public about the legal action being taken against individuals creating public nuisances, thereby highlighting the steps taken by the authorities to maintain public order and ensure the protection of law-abiding citizens.

Furthermore, the program highlighted the distinction between those committing inappropriate acts in public spaces and the larger transgender community, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding the rights and dignity of transgender persons. It is crucial to note that the content of the program was derived entirely from information provided by local authorities and was corroborated by other reputable news agencies. The report was aired with due diligence, in full compliance with journalistic standards, and solely to inform the public of a matter of public interest.

Additionally, it clarified that the caption accompanying the impugned initially contained/captioned the word "fake," which was an inadvertent error. This error was immediately rectified upon its being brought to its attention. At no point was there any intention to mislead the public or defame any individuals or communities, which is substantiated by the fact that the main reporting did not anywhere use the said word or insinuate that the transgender arrested were fake, which can be showcased by the true translation of the transcript.

Thus, in view of the aforesaid, it submitted that it had not violated any of the core principles of the NBDSA or the Code of Ethics, nor had it published any news without verifying its authenticity or with the intent to defame, demean, or belittle the LGBTQ+ community, as alleged by the complainant. It reiterated that it had strictly adhered to the principles of impartiality, objectivity, and balance in the impugned program.

In view of the above, it stated that it had abided by the principles of news reporting and publishing, and by journalistic norms, and that the complainant had failed to establish any deviation therefrom. Thus, the complaint ought to be dismissed at the outset.

Complaint dated 26.11.2024 to NBDSA

The complainant stated that the channel, in its response, claimed that it labelled the accused trans women as fake in error, which he does not believe to be true. The channel did so intentionally to sensationalize the matter and target helpless, marginalized individuals.

The channel admitted that its source was the local police. This admission shows that the channel simply served as a mouthpiece for the prejudiced law enforcement authorities, which have a history of harassing trans women from poor backgrounds. The channel defamed trans women by publishing their pictures before they had been convicted of any crimes. The channel took this liberty because it knew the accused women wouldn't have the means to fight back. Lastly, the channel continues to use images of trans women unrelated to this case, thereby violating their privacy and defaming them as well.

Decision of NBDA at its meeting held on 13.12.2024

NBDSA considered the complaint, response of the broadcaster and after viewing the footage of the broadcast and the translated transcript, decided to call the parties for a hearing.

On being served with Notices, the following were present during the hearing on 18.11.2025:

Complainant

Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade

Broadcaster

Ms. Annie, Compliance Officer, NBDSA

Submissions of the Parties

The complainant submitted that in the impugned news report, the broadcaster used images of trans women not connected to this case. He questioned the source of these images and why they were used, especially since the report did not involve the private individuals shown in these images.

The broadcast used unrelated images and claimed the arrested trans women were fake, which was blatantly transphobic, unverified, and inaccurate. The complainant questioned the broadcaster's basis for this claim, whether it had spoken to the

individuals involved and whether they had confessed to being cisgender men pretending to be trans. He asked for a copy of the FIR if allegations were based on it, and whether the broadcaster had spoken to trans community leaders or the accused to verify the FIR's accuracy.

The broadcaster submitted that the impugned news report did not contravene any guidelines, codes of ethics, or principles of self-regulation. The program in question was produced in a neutral, objective, and impartial manner. The news concerning the arrest of eleven members from the transgender community for creating public nuisance, following raids conducted in various areas of Cyberabad, was factually accurate and based on credible sources, including local law enforcement agencies. The news regarding the arrest of the eleven individuals was also reported by The Hindu.

According to its sources, initial reports indicated that the individuals arrested were men pretending to be transgender persons. Consequently, the report initially included the term "fake"; however, upon clarification, this error was promptly corrected. The program was broadcast solely to present these facts, with no intention to defame, belittle, or demean the transgender community.

The broadcaster stated that the broadcast did not seek to harm the reputation of the transgender community but rather to report the actions of specific individuals who, by engaging in disruptive behavior, could potentially cause harm to the dignity of genuine transgender persons. Further, the images used in the broadcast were provided to it by the local law enforcement agencies.

Decision

NBDSA considered the complaint, response of the broadcaster, gave due consideration to the arguments of the parties, and reviewed the transcript and the footage of the impugned broadcast.

From the submissions of the parties, it transpires that the pictures/photographs that are shown in the programme are fake, as this aspect is not disputed by the broadcaster. The explanation of the broadcaster, however, is that these photographs were provided to it by the police. However, no documentary evidence is produced in support of this assertion. Moreover, the broadcaster itself accepted that it had corrected the error by removing the word "fake".

NBDSA observed that, as far as the use of the word "fake" is concerned, the broadcaster should exercise caution and, in accordance with the principle of accuracy, verify facts before broadcasting any content.

In so far as dereliction in the programme in putting the photographs and use of the word "fake" is concerned, which has undermined the image of those whose photographs are shown, NBDSA also imposes a penalty of Rs. 1,00,000.

NBDSA is also of the opinion that the photographs/pictures should be removed as well. These directions should be complied with within 7 days from the issuance of the Order. The complaint is accordingly disposed of with the aforesaid directions. NBDSA decided to inform the complainant and the broadcaster accordingly.

NBDSA directs NBDA to send:

- (a) A copy of this Order to the complainant and the broadcaster;
- (b) Circulate this Order to all Members, Editors & Legal Heads of NBDA;
- (c) Host this Order on its website and include it in its next Annual Report and
- (d) Release the Order to media.

It is clarified that any statement made by the parties in the proceedings before NBDSA while responding to the complaint and putting forth their view points, and any finding or observation by NBDSA in regard to the broadcasts, in its proceedings or in this Order, are only in the context of an examination as to whether there are any violations of any broadcasting standards and guidelines. They are not intended to be 'admissions' by the broadcaster, nor intended to be 'findings' by NBDSA in regard to any civil/criminal liability.



Justice A.K Sikri (Retd.)
Chairperson

Place: New Delhi

Date : 17.02.2026