

ONLY BY EMAIL

May 20, 2026

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| 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.156) dated 15.07.2025 filed by Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade against a broadcast aired on 13.07.2025 on Zee News

Attached please find Order dated May 19, 2026 passed by News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority.

Regards



Shreya Rastogi
For & on behalf of NBDSA

News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority

Order No. 218 (2026)

Complainant: Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade

Channel: Zee News

Date of Broadcast: 13.07.2025

Since the complainant was not satisfied with the response received from the broadcaster, on 31.07.2025, the complaint was escalated to the second level of redressal, i.e., NBDSA.

Complaint dated 15.07.2025

According to Delhi Police, on July 12, an e-rickshaw carrying glass panels was hit from behind, causing the glass pieces to scatter on the road. The complainant stated that on July 13, this incident was used by the broadcaster to demonise the Muslim community by deliberately and falsely claiming that this attack was planned by Muslims against the Hindu kawad yatis. From the beginning of the show, the anchor made allegations and direct claims that were not only baseless but also dangerous. Multiple false tropes against the Muslim community were repeated throughout the program. The anchor asked one-sided and leading questions, interrupted and silenced panellists who demanded an inquiry and allowed panellists who vilified Muslim people to go unchecked.

The graphics displayed throughout the program contained AI-generated images showing a Muslim man spitting in food, a Muslim man spitting in orange juice, a group of Muslim men on one side of the screen and Hindu pilgrims walking on glass pieces and iron nails scattered on the road.

Further, during the broadcast, the following tickers were aired "कट्टरपंथी गैंग परेशान...कांवड़ यात्री सावधान!", "थूक-कील और कांच...कांवड़ यात्रा पर आंच?", "कांवड़ियों के खिलाफ किसकी साजिश?" and "सावन में भोले के भक्तों से किसे नफरत?".

Transcript, translations and timestamps of violations:

The anchor began the debate by saying, "There is a huge conspiracy against Sanatanis. 'Nafarati gang' is running an agenda to disturb Kawadiya. Broken glass pieces and metal nails are being thrown at different places. At some places, saliva is being mixed with juice as proof of extremism. Yesterday night, in Delhi, the extremists threw glass pieces and nails on the kawad route. Sanatani and the administration were shocked. The glass pieces and nails were thrown on a 1 km route. Government took quick action. But the bigger question is, who plotted this against kawadiya. Who is this hateful gang that laid burning coal instead of flowers on the kawad route? Why is the extremist gang crazy after Sanatanis?"

From 1:44 onwards, claims from several unnamed persons were aired, including one who said, "this is done by anti-social elements, that the glass was deliberately broken, crushed and thrown on this route". Another person said, "he was playing bhajan due to which 8-10 Muslim men beat him". It was also claimed that "they think that a (Muslim) juice seller spat in their juice". Another person alleged that "after urinating and spitting in food, those who want to take revenge against Kawadiyas are now taking 'jihadi' action against them by putting glass pieces on the route". Chants of "Jai Jai Siya Ram" by a person were aired. It was also claimed that "specific people" who do politics to appease "a specific religion" do not want peace in Delhi, and that is why purposefully such incidents take place in Delhi.

At 4:00, the anchor asks the BJP spokesperson, whether this was a "plot or a prank?" In response, the spokesperson said, *"Some people casually call plots as pranks. This is plot against every Sanatani who is going on Kawad yatra or praying at home. This is a slap on every Hindu's face to show them their place."* The anchor does not interrupt.

But at 5:50, when a Muslim panellist tries to counter the BJP spokesperson and insists that there must be an inquiry, the anchor stops him and says that the BJP spokesperson is not naming any religion. He asks the Muslim panellist, *"why are you feeling attacked?"*

At 6:37, the BJP spokesperson says to the Muslim panellists, *"Your people do the plotting. Whether it is in the form of halal or as Muslims. Your people carry out these "pranks". Muslims like you only spit and throw glass and block roads."*

At 10:22, the BJP spokesperson targeting the Muslim community says, *"You are the ones who lie. You say one thing and feed something else. You call it a potato and feed eggs instead. You spit in juices."* To which the anchor does not object.

At 12:00, a political analyst explains why this incident might have happened. According to him, *"Some people believe that apart from Allah no one is worthy of worship. If some other religious procession is crossing our street then we can oppose it, in front of Allah. This could be planned and done by those Muslims who think there can be no one but Allah. Muslim people are changing their name and running dhabas. They want to hide their identity. Instead of stopping them, it is frequently asked why do you want dhaba owners and staff to display their names outside the dhaba."* The anchor again does not object.

At 29:30, BJP spokesperson says to the Muslim panellist, *"I never named any religion in the beginning magar chor ki dadhi mein tinka tabhi aap Islam ki vaqalat karne lage. People like you don't believe in the constitution. You think by putting glasses and nails on the road, the kawads would be stopped?! We have fought hard, and Ram Mandir was built under Narendra Modi."* The anchor does not object and thereafter the debate is ended abruptly.

The impact of such reportage on the viewers can be ascertained from the comments section of the Facebook video.

Response dated 30.07.2025 from Broadcaster

The broadcaster categorically denied each and every allegation, insinuation, and assertion made in the complaint against the broadcast aired on its channel on 13.07.2025 concerning an incident involving broken glass pieces found on the Kanwar Yatra route in Delhi. The allegations of violating provisions of various NBDSA guidelines are misconceived, factually erroneous, and legally untenable. The program in question was broadcast in adherence to established journalistic standards and in exercise of the channel's constitutionally protected right under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India. In response to the specific allegations it submits as follows:

The impugned broadcast was based on verifiable, newsworthy statements made by elected public representatives, including a Cabinet Minister from the Delhi Government and a sitting Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Both individuals publicly raised concerns about a possible conspiracy angle behind the presence of broken glass on the Kanwar Yatra route, suggesting that such acts could potentially endanger the lives and safety of Hindu pilgrims.

It is standard and widely accepted journalistic practice to report, analyse, and debate statements made by public functionaries, especially when such statements relate to issues of public safety, communal harmony, and law and order. The debate was centred around these publicly expressed views and sought to reflect the range of perspectives that were part of the broader discourse at that time.

At the time of the broadcast on 13.07.2025, the Delhi Police had not issued a conclusive statement. The investigation was ongoing, with reports indicating that CCTV footage was being reviewed and an FIR had been filed against unknown persons. These facts were duly mentioned in its coverage. The program did not claim any definitive conclusion but examined the statements and concerns raised by elected officials, alongside the evolving facts of the investigation.

As soon as the Delhi Police issued an official clarification on 13.07.2025, stating that the incident was the result of an accidental fall of glass panels from an e-rickshaw, it promptly updated its coverage. At approximately 8:25 PM, the channel aired a "Breaking News" segment, that clearly stated the police's version, highlighting that there was no evidence of conspiracy involved. This timely update was prominently aired and clearly conveyed to viewers the latest factual position as per official

sources. This demonstrates the channel's commitment to factual accuracy, transparency, and responsible journalism.

The graphics, tickers, and visuals used during the broadcast were editorially vetted and approved through standard internal review mechanisms. The imagery or thematic representation was aimed at reflecting the seriousness of the concerns raised and not intended to incite or mislead. At no point were unverified or inflammatory visuals deployed to create panic or promote stereotypes.

The anchor ensured that the debate remained anchored in the public statements and the state of facts available at the time. No defamatory or communally biased content was presented. Counterviews were allowed during the debate, and the discussion was moderated in line with NBDSA's guidelines on Anchored Debates and Coverage of Communal Issues.

In light of the above, the broadcaster unequivocally denied any violation of the Code of Ethics and Related Guidelines. It stated that the program maintained fairness, reflected newsworthy concerns, and neither stereotyped nor promoted communal disharmony. The immediate update post-police clarification further affirmed its adherence to best practices

Decision of NBDA at its meeting held on 14.10.2025

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

On being served with the notices, the following persons were present at the hearing on 23.02.2026:

Complainant

1. Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade

Broadcaster

1. Ms. Ritwika Nanda, Counsel for ZMCL
2. Mr. Sarvesh Kumar Singh, Deputy Manager Legal, ZMCL

Submissions of the Parties

The complainant submitted that the impugned broadcast emanated from an incident in Delhi, where an e-rickshaw carrying glass panels was involved in an accident, causing the glass to scatter on the road. However, in the impugned broadcast, a debate was conducted on this incident, wherein it was falsely claimed that this was done deliberately by the Muslims to hurt the Kavar Yatris.

In addition, the broadcast again promoted incorrect stereotypes against the Muslim community by accusing them of spitting and urinating in food. Further, in the broadcast, photoshopped images of Muslim men spitting in juice and glasses were aired. The tickers aired were also against a particular community. Despite the clarification issued by Delhi Police stating that the incident was an accident, the anchor presented the matter as a confirmed fact. This sentiment was supported by the other panellists in the debate. When one Muslim panellist cautioned against coming to any conclusion and to await investigation in the matter, he was cut off.

Further, in its response, the broadcaster stated that, after receiving clarification from the Delhi Police, it immediately ran the update as breaking news. However, the footage of the subsequent broadcast was not shared with him, despite his request to the broadcaster. The complainant submitted that, notwithstanding the above, the subsequent broadcast should not be considered a mitigating factor and requested that the complaint be adjudicated on the merits.

The broadcaster submitted that the impugned broadcast was based on verifiable, newsworthy statements made by public representatives, including a Cabinet Minister from the Delhi Government and a sitting Member of the Legislative Assembly. The impugned broadcast was aired on 13.07.2025, at which time the Delhi Police had provided no clarification; they had only said that an investigation into the incident was underway. Later that same day, in the evening, the Delhi Police issued an official clarification, stating that the incident was the result of an accidental fall of glass panels from an e-rickshaw. Upon receiving this clarification, it promptly updated its coverage. At approximately 8:25 PM, the channel aired a "Breaking News" segment that clearly stated the police's version, highlighting that there was no evidence of a conspiracy.

Decision of NBDA at its meeting held on 23.02.2026

After considering the submissions of the broadcaster and the complainant, NBDSA directed the broadcaster to provide the link and the duration of the broadcast during which updates were aired.

Communication dated 11.03.2026 from Broadcaster

1. The broadcaster most respectfully submitted that pursuant to the issuance of the official clarification by the Delhi Police dated 13.07.2025, wherein it was categorically stated that the incident in question occurred due to the *accidental fall of glass panels from an e-rickshaw* and that no evidence of any conspiracy was found, the channel promptly took corrective editorial steps. Immediately upon receipt and verification of the said clarification, the channel updated its coverage and broadcast the said clarification as Breaking News at approximately 8:00 p.m. on 13.07.2025, thereby informing viewers of the official position communicated by

the competent authority. The broadcaster annexed the video link of the aforesaid broadcast.

Decision

NBDSA considered the complaint, the response from the broadcaster, reviewed the footage of the broadcast and considered the submissions advanced during the hearing.

It was noted that the impugned broadcast focused on an incident in Delhi during the Kanwar Yatra, in which broken glass was found on the road. As per the complainant, in the broadcast, a debate was conducted on the incident, in which suggestive and leading questions were raised that directly and/or indirectly implicated a specific community. It was insinuated that this incident was deliberate and part of a conspiracy of that community against the Kanwar Yatris.

It was noted that, as per the broadcaster's submission, the impugned broadcast was based on statements made by certain elected public representatives who had raised concerns about a possible conspiracy behind the incident.

NBDSA was of the view that the statements made by the public representatives did not absolve the broadcaster of the responsibility to conduct its own independent verification of facts and to refrain from giving such a narrative of the incident without a conclusive police investigation. In the absence of such verification of facts, it was highly improper for the news channel to conduct a debate that had the potential to stigmatise a community and create communal disharmony.

As admitted by the broadcaster itself, the police investigation later revealed that the glass had broken and scattered on the road as a result of an accident involving an e-rickshaw. In view of the same, NBDSA held that not only were the insinuations/allegations levelled against a particular community in the impugned broadcast factually incorrect, but also that the linkage of this incident to allegations that members of a particular community spit in food and deceive Kanwar Yatris into eating non-vegetarian food by misrepresenting it as vegetarian was unfounded.

NBDSA reiterated that by making these allegations and assertions without any verification, the broadcaster had clearly violated the guidelines on Racial and Religious Harmony and Accuracy under the Code of Conduct.

As a responsible News channel bound by the Code of Conduct, the broadcaster should have adhered to its stipulations and borne in mind the impact that such false or fake news can have. Further, the use of imagery of a man in a skullcap spitting into juice was also not in good taste.

While the broadcaster had submitted video clips of the clarifications it aired based on the statement made by the Delhi Police, those clarifications were less than a minute long and appeared to be lip service rather than corrective action, particularly given that the original broadcast lasted 55 minutes.

Keeping in mind the principles of Corrigendum, NBDSA observed that the broadcaster should have scheduled corrections/clarifications in such a way that attracts sufficient viewer attention and is not concealed.

In view of the above, NBDSA decided to admonish the broadcaster and directed it to be careful and avoid such violations in future broadcasts.

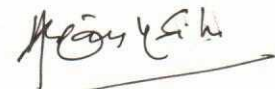
NBDSA further directed the broadcaster to remove the footage of the impugned broadcast, if still available from the website of the channel (s), YouTube, and remove all hyperlinks, including access, which should be confirmed to NBDSA in writing within 7 days of the Order.

NBDSA decided to close the complaint with the aforementioned observations and 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 : 19-05-2026