

News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority

Order No. 207(2025)

Complainant: Citizens for Justice & Peace

Channel: Times Now Navbharat

Programmes: "Desh Ka Mood Meter: सनातन संस्कृति..कट्टरपंथियों के लिए सॉफ्ट टारगेट? |

CM Himanta Biswa Sarma News"

Date of Broadcast: 02.09.2024

Since the complainant did not receive a response from the broadcaster within the time stipulated under the News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Regulations, on 23.09.2024, the complaint was escalated to the second level of grievance redressal, i.e., NBDSA.

Complaint dated 09.09.2024

The complaint concerned a news segment referring to the recent arrest of a Bengali-speaking Muslim singer, Altaf Hussain, in Assam for allegedly inciting hatred against the state's ethnic communities through a protest song he released last month.

After the arrest, Assam's Chief Minister discussed it during a Facebook live session, claiming the song was part of an 'attack', an attempt to "*change Bihu into Miya Bihu*" and was derogatory to Assamese culture. This statement was then picked up by the media and used to spread misinformation and cast suspicion on the song's intentions.

The Sentinel reported that the lyrics in Bengali resembled a Bangladeshi protest song, "*Desh ta tomar baper naki?*". Through his lyrics, Altaf had hoped to highlight discrimination faced by "*Miyas*"— Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam. He noted that while individuals from all communities may commit crimes, it was only *Miyas* who were targeted and falsely accused of being undocumented immigrants.

The impugned show exemplified the dangers of biased, inflammatory reporting, using provocative language and divisive rhetoric to frame communal tensions in a highly skewed manner. The anchor's statements, like referring to "*Jibadi syndicates*" and questioning whether Hindu festivals were being deliberately targeted, created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion.

The repeated portrayal of Bengali Muslims as "illegal immigrants" and "threats" to Hindu culture not only distorted the facts but also fueled communal animosity. The show dangerously pitted Hindus against Muslims, thereby perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing communal divisions.

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Contents of the show:

The show began with the anchor asking whether “*the Sanatani festivals of India becoming easy target for the extremists? Who are these people from Assam to Kerala who are making these festivals a communal issue?*”. The show's premise was thus set by the anchor through the raising of these highly suggestive and volatile statements.

The anchor further stated, “*Are the Hindu festivals in India on the target of extremists? Is there an open communal conspiracy to attempt to change the meaning of the Hindu festivals? Is there a clever plan to break the culture of the Sanatani Hindus in India? Is there a big plan being enforced in India through a Jihadi syndicate to end the Hindu culture in India? From North to South, is there a communal attempt to change the Sanatan History?*” [Time stamp: 1:18- 1:51]

Exaggerated and fear-inducing language was used to create a sense of alarm among Hindus, framing Muslims as part of a sinister ‘communal conspiracy’ without any evidence. By linking the alleged ‘takeover’ of Hindu festivals with the controversial and disputed concept of ‘Love Jihad’ and illegal immigration, the anchor reinforced unfounded fears of a Muslim ‘invasion’. The anchor stated, “*After listening to these questions, you might think that the same is not possible, as prior to this, one had only heard of how illegal immigrants have been able to illegally takeover the land of the Border States, such as Assam. You must have also heard about Love-Jihad. However, this conspiracy of taking over the festivals is something that will shock you to the core as it is said that once a religion loses its culture, its existence itself comes into questioning. And this time, the alarm bells have rung in the state of Assam.*” [Time stamp: 1:59- 2:43]

He then focused on the arrest of a Muslim singer, using it to paint the entire Muslim community as provocative or extremist, and implied that this act was part of a larger conspiracy against Hindus. He stated, “*A singer named Altaf Hussain was arrested by the Assam police. a resident of the Dhubri village, Hussain was changing the wordings of the classic Bihu songs of Assam and was singing them in his own style. Do you know what the style and wordings of these songs were? Recently, Hussain sang a song which had the wording “this country does not belong to your father”. This provocative statement of his was inspired by the extremist protest that was being held against ex PM of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina.*” [Time stamp: 2:47- 3:34]

Furthermore, the anchor said, “*Altaf took this same slogan and made it a song in Assamese language. There are clear charges against Altaf, of distorting the Bihu language in his own style, which we can also call the extremist style, and of using Bihu classic song for this provocative statement.*” The description of altering a Bihu song as an “extremist style” exaggerated the incident and cast a cultural reinterpretation as something dangerous, continuing the fear-based narrative. [Time stamp: 3:34- 4:01]

The anchor spread misinformation by manipulating what the term *Miya* stood for, by stating that “*Who do we actually call Miya? In Assam, Miya does not mean Muslims, rather*

these are illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, or the Bangladeshi Muslims who speak Bengali. These people are not the actual residents of Assam, but their population is increasing quickly. The situation is such that the actual Muslim resident of Assam is limited to only 37% while the rest are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, which we call Miyas.” [Time stamp: 4:02- 4:41]

By equating "Miyas" with illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, the anchor not only conflated citizenship issues with religion but also demonised the entire Muslim community of Assam.

The anchor further said that *“In addition to their increasing population, their power has become such that out of the 126 Vidhan Sabha seats in Assam, at least 30 seats are influenced by these people. Just think, those who have come from another country have the audacity to tell the actual residents of Assam that the state of Assam does not belong to them”,* which promoted fear of political domination by Muslims, by portraying them as ‘outsiders’ who were gaining undue influence. [Time stamp: 4:44- 5:04]

Pursuant to this, the anchor unjustly linked an isolated criminal case to the broader Muslim community, furthering the stereotype of Muslims as criminals by stating that *“In the recent times, an incident of rape of a minor girl was reported from the Nagaon village of Assam. The three accused in the case were Miya. There were protests as this incident was reported. A few organisations gave an ultimatum to the Miya to leave from the northern part of Assam. Police quickly took action and arrested the accused. It was between these incidents that Altaf had released his song. Now think about it, look at the list of the crimes that have been alleged and how these people are trying to defend it.” [Time stamp: 5:24- 6:02]*

Continuing with the unfair connection between the heinous crime against women and cultural distortion, the anchor stated, *“To defend the acts of those who have been accused of raping a minor, songs with words saying that Assam does not belong to your father is being made. Firstly, they are making such songs, and then they are blaming the system of the state. On top of this, they are distorting the Bihu culture of Assam. Hindus have been celebrating this festival since thousands of years. You will find it in Bhagwat Gita, history books and in books written by many foreigners who have visited India.” [Time stamp: 6:02- 6:46]*

In addition, the anchor provided that *“However, in the state of Kerala, multiple attempts have been made to cut the connection of this festival from our religious history. Look at certain social media posts that have been put up in regards to Hindu festivals, and then you will understand that this is not only taking place in Assam, but in the whole of India.” [Time stamp: 6:46- 7:12]*

While showing social media post on the screen, the anchor said, *“In reality, these so-called secular community within our country, they are on this mission to separate Hinds from their own festivals. These people not only declared Onam to be a Malayali festival, but also forcefully included caste into it to divide the Hindus.” [Time stamp: 7:20- 7:38]*

Another social media post was shown by the anchor, while saying that *“Thomas Issac, a big leader of the CPI(M) in Kerala, he spread misinformation about Onam by his social media post. He also made certain offensive statements against Vamana avatar. Everyone throughout the history have said that Onam is a Sanatani festival.”* [Time stamp: 7:40- 8:08]

Post this, the anchor narrated his version of the story behind the celebration of the festival Onam, which involved Lord Vishnu's avatar Vamana and Mahabali. His story involved the legend of Mahabali and the three steps. He claimed that the narrative of the festive was now being manipulated. The anchor's narrative simplified the complex story of Onam and framed those who highlighted Mahabali as opponents of Lord Vamana. This framing stoked unnecessary religious tensions, implying that certain interpretations of Onam were part of a larger conspiracy to divide Hindus. The anchor stated that, *“Let me make one thing clear, by siding with Mahabali and speaking against Lord Vamana can be deemed nothing less than a conspiracy as God and demons are stepbrothers.”* [Time stamp: 9:28- 9:42]

Furthermore, the anchor provided that *“King Mahabali is a Brahmin, but the Vampanthi people claim that Mahabali was a demon or a Dalit in order to further their agenda of creating differences within the Hindu community. This is a long plan. Before the year 2017, the celebration of Diwali was limited to gifts, shopping, eatables and crackers, while Lord Ram was forgotten. How would one have even celebrated Lord Ram as Ayodhya (considered as the birthplace of Lord Ram) was so quiet. All that changed under the governance of UP CM Yogi.”* [Time stamp: 9:48- 10:30]

The anchor's statement attempted to stir up resentment by suggesting that earlier Diwali celebrations had somehow 'forgotten' Lord Ram, framing Yogi Adityanath's governance as a corrective to an alleged cultural erosion. This pushed the narrative that there had been a concerted effort to erase Hindu religious figures and festivals, which fueled communal tension.

The anchor concluded the show by stating, *“This has been a long process, and it is still continuing today. In Assam, Miyas are now entering the Hindu songs of Bihu. In Kashmir, when the National Conference party came, they released a manifesto wherein they proposed changing the names of two Hindu temples to Muslims names. Think about it. From Kashmir to Kerala, from East to West, the Sanatan culture is fighting a big fight.”* [Time stamp: 10:43- 11:11]

The anchor drew an exaggerated connection between isolated incidents in Assam, Kashmir, and Kerala to craft a narrative of a widespread assault on Hindu culture. By framing cultural and political changes as part of a unified 'fight' against Hindu traditions, the statement reinforced the notion of Hindus being under siege, further polarising communities.

What the show entailed:

The extracts above show that the anchor had manipulated language and symbols to pit Hindus against Muslims by framing Muslims, particularly Bengali Muslims or "*Miyas*" in Assam, as a direct threat to Hindu culture. This form of reporting was not just biased; it actively sought to sow communal discord by positioning one community as inherently adversarial to another.

The anchor's rhetoric and use of emotionally charged phrases not only created a false narrative but weaponised religious identity, portraying Hindus as victims and Muslims as aggressors in a supposed cultural war.

Throughout the show, the anchor claimed that Muslims were distorting sacred Hindu traditions like Bihu or that a Muslim singer's actions were part of a larger extremist plot, thereby blatantly sensationalizing isolated events and transforming them into communal flashpoints. It suggested that the cultural practices of one community were under siege by another, thereby inciting feelings of insecurity and fear among Hindus.

Moreover, by linking criminal acts committed by individuals to an entire community, the reporting insinuated collective guilt, making it appear as though Muslim men, by virtue of their religious identity, were a threat to Hindu women and society at large.

This narrative, repeated across different contexts—whether through the incidents highlighted in Assam or Kerala, sought to craft an overarching, pan-India narrative of Hindus being under attack by Muslims. The program exploited cultural differences and nuances to reinforce a monolithic, exclusionary version of Hinduism that must be defended against an external, Muslim 'other'.

Such tactics were not merely sensationalist but dangerously divisive, as they encouraged Hindus to view Muslims with suspicion and hostility. In doing so, the media became complicit in fostering communal violence, as this type of reporting fans the flames of distrust, turning neighbours into enemies.

Biased reporting, as seen from the statements made by the anchor, was deeply damaging to the fabric of a democratic country like India, as it exacerbated existing tensions and fostered an atmosphere of suspicion and hostility. By presenting skewed narratives and using inflammatory language, the anchor not only distorted facts but also reinforced dangerous stereotypes.

The Muslim population, already vulnerable to marginalisation, bore the brunt of such harmful narratives. The consistent portrayal of Muslims, particularly Bengali Muslims, as 'outsiders' or 'infiltrators,' contributed to their dehumanisation and fueled communal polarisation. Moreover, biased reporting polarises public opinion

and detracts from the real issues that should be addressed.

In cases of communal issues, the media's duty is to de-escalate tensions, not inflame them. Anchors should aim to provide context, facts, and diverse perspectives to ensure that viewers are informed rather than incited.

Neutrality is essential to maintaining credibility and trust. An anchor's role is not to take sides or amplify one community's grievances over another's but to present the news in a balanced manner, giving voice to multiple viewpoints and promoting understanding. Anchors who allow their own biases to colour their reporting, or deliberately push a communal agenda for higher ratings, violate the principles of fairness that are central to journalism.

The channel has acted in complete violation of this directive on hate speech, as well as the Code of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards, and certain Specific Guidelines relating to conducting debates on TV news channels.

Reply dated 04.10.2024 by the broadcaster

1. At the outset, the channel did not violate any rules and regulations in telecasting the subject news segment. The subject programme was merely a report on the arrest of a singer for promoting enmity between different groups of people, as well as insulting religion and religious feelings. The channel and its representatives have always endeavored to bring to the fore core issues and project as many diverse views as possible on such issues.
2. By way of the subject news segment, the channel had merely fulfilled its journalistic obligations by bringing forth issues that are of immense public importance and had in no way encouraged the Islamophobic rhetoric or targeted any particular community. The impugned episode was neither intended to polarise citizens nor to spread any negative propaganda, nor to encourage violence against any class of people in the country. The debates/ programmes impugned did not violate any code of ethics, rules, or regulations in any manner whatsoever, as alleged or otherwise or at all.
3. Nowhere in the entire news segment did the anchor attempt to polarize the audience or marginalize a particular community. Viewing the subject programme in its entirety would reveal that the anchor had not demonised the entire Muslim community of Assam, or stereotyped Muslims as criminals.
4. **Brief of the show:**
 - i. The subject news segment began with the anchor narrating how a singer, by the name of Altaf Hussain, belonging to the Miya community, resident of Dhubri Village, Assam, had been arrested by the police for the offences

- of promoting enmity between two religious groups as well as insulting religion and religious practices. The anchor further narrated the prompt action taken by the Assam Government in the matter. (Time stamp 02:45-02:49).
- ii. The anchor reported on the song written and composed by Altaf Hussain, which led to his arrest. The song had a similar tone to indigenous Bihu songs, which are popular in Assam. Thereafter, the anchor reported on the lyrics and their origin. He merely stated that the lyrics of the song are “Desh ta tomarbapemaki”. (Time stamp 02:56-03:16).
 - iii. The anchor then reported on the origins of the phrase “Desh ta tomarbapernaki”, how the phrase had been widely used during protests in Bangladesh, and how the same has been translated into an Assamese song by Altaf Hussain (Time stamp 03:20-03:39).
 - iv. The same was a song composed by Bangladeshi playback singer Mousumi Chowdhury. Accordingly, the anchor had merely reported on the origins of the phrase while fulfilling his journalistic duties. The anchor discussed the origins of the 'Miya' community. He merely stated that in Assam, the term 'Miya' is used to refer to the group of people, who are not indigenous to Assam, and are Bangladeshi Muslims who have migrated to Assam (Time stamp 03:20-03:39). It stated that the averment in the complaint that the channel spread misinformation is based on selective interpretation of the reporting done by the channel and is therefore denied in toto.
 - v. Further, during the entire subject news segment, the channel had clearly distinguished between the 'Miya' community and the indigenous Muslim community of Assam. Therefore, the assertions that the channel had conflated citizenship with religion or had attempted to demonize the entire Muslim community of Assam were baseless and denied.
 - vi. The anchor next reported on the data of the population of the 'Miya' community of Assam, and their impact on the Vidhansabha elections of Assam. Further, he stated that the indigenous Muslim community of Assam makes up only 37% of the Muslim population of the state, while the 'Miya' community makes up the remaining 67% population. (Time stamp 04:25- 04:52).
 - vii. Next, the anchor reported on an incident that shook up the entire population of Assam. The anchor reported on a rape case of a minor in Assam, in which all the accused belonged to the 'Miya' community. The

incident led to widespread protests in Assam. (Time stamp 05:25-05:37). The averments that the anchor linked an isolated incident with the entire Muslim community are wrong and denied. It is reiterated that during the entire news report, the channel had distinguished between the 'Miya' community and the Assamese Muslim community, and nowhere in the entire report had the reporter asserted that the entire Muslim community of Assam had been involved in criminal activities.

viii. Subsequently, the news segment reported on the history of the festival of Onam in Kerala. The anchor narrated one of the legends behind the Onam festival. (Time stamp 08:11-09:24). In this regard, the assertions that the anchor had attempted to simplify the complex history of Onam are denied as false and misconstrued. Please note that while there may be various versions behind the history of Onam, the anchor narrated only one of the versions, which in no way implied that the other interpretations of the history of Onam were part of a larger conspiracy.

In view of the above, it is denied that the subject news segment attempted to target a particular community, or 'pitted Hindus against Muslims, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing communal divisions.

5. It is denied that the anchor endeavored to strengthen the communal divide by portraying a particular community as aggressors. It is furthermore denied that by framing an isolated criminal incident within a broader communal context implied that this incident was part of a larger conspiracy against Hindus. It is pertinent to note that the subject news segment is a mere reportage of the arrest of a singer in Assam, and during the entire reportage, the anchor had sought to uphold the highest professional integrity and journalistic standards.
6. It is denied that the anchor had, in any way, asserted that Muslims had distorted the Hindu traditions, or had reported on the arrest of Altaf Hussain merely because he belonged to the Muslim community. The entire news segment was merely a report on the arrest of Altaf Hussain, as well as the celebration of the Onam festival in Kerala.
7. It is further denied that the statements by the anchor promoted fear of political domination by Muslims and portrayed them as "outsiders". It is pertinent to note that the anchor was merely putting forth the data on the population of the Miya community and the political impact of such population on the politics of Assam; nowhere during this entire reportage had the anchor portrayed the Muslim community as "outsiders", so as to widen the gap between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The averments of bias in the complaint were baseless and unfounded.

8. It is further denied that the subject news segment had portrayed Muslims as 'outsiders'. It is being reiterated that the subject news segment had distinguished between the 'Miya' community and the indigenous Assamese Muslim community. The subject news segment merely stated that in Assam, 'Miya' referred to the group of people who migrated to Assam from Bangladesh, and in no way marginalizes or demonised the Muslim community at large.
9. It is further denied that the debate endeavored to spread a divisive agenda, or targeted a particular community. It is further denied that the debate selectively represented facts, wherein the fact of the matter is that the complaint has selectively referred to certain snippets from the debate and attempted to paint the debate show and the channel in a poor light.
10. It is denied that the broadcast violated the principles of impartiality, objectivity and neutrality enshrined under the Code of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards and Guidelines issued by the News Broadcasting and Digital Standards Authority (NBDSA).

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, decided to call the parties for a hearing.

On being served with Notices, the following were present during the hearing on 22.02.2025:

Complainant

1. Ms. Tanya Arora
2. Mr. Aman Khan

Broadcaster

1. Mr. Kunal Tandon, Senior Advocate
2. Mr. Utkarsh Singh, News Editor, Times Now Navbharat
3. Ms. Kirtima Maravoor, Compliance Officer, NBDSA

Submissions of the Complainant

The news segment concerned Mr. Altaf Husain, the Bengali-speaking Muslim singer, who was arrested in Assam for allegedly inciting hatred against the state's ethnic communities through a protest song, which highlighted the discrimination faced by the Miya community in Assam. Post Mr. Hussain's arrest, the Chief Minister of Assam, in a Facebook live session, called the song part of an "attack" and an attempt to "change Bihu into Miya Bihu."

The impugned broadcast started with the anchor raising the question of how Hindu festivals were being targeted in states like Assam, Kerala, and Kashmir, and alleging that there was a conspiracy to convert Hindu festivals and attack the Hindu culture. The exaggerated connection between isolated events across different states, Assam, Kashmir, and Kerala, was designed to create the false impression of a nationwide, coordinated effort to undermine Hindu traditions. This deliberate framing positioned one community as adversarial to another, violating the fundamental journalistic duty of neutrality and fairness.

The anchor used the term Jihadi Syndicate and linked the alleged “takeover” of Hindu festivals with “Love Jihad.” He claimed the Miya community were illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The actual Muslim residents of Assam were limited to only 37%, with the rest being illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. It was alleged that these people control 30 of 126 Vidhan Sabha seats in Assam, and their political participation was a threat. He also alleged that a demographic change in Assam was deliberate and claimed Mr. Altaf Hussain’s arrest to be part of a larger conspiracy and cited incidents elsewhere in India. A CPI(M) leader’s statements on Onam, Vamana, and Mahabali were cited to stoke religious tensions. The anchor said that King Mahabali was a Brahmin; however, the Vampanthi people claim that Mahabali was a demon or a Dalit in order to further their agenda of creating differences within the Hindu community. He further said that *“Before the year 2017, the celebration of Diwali was limited to gifts, shopping, eatables and crackers, while Lord Ram was forgotten. How would one had even celebrated Lord Ram as Ayodhya (considered as the birthplace of Lord Ram) was so quiet. All that changed under the governance of UP CM Yogi.”*

The complainant submitted that its objection was to the premise of the show itself, in which the arrest was linked to a larger conspiracy. There was not only fear-mongering in the broadcast, but also divisive communal rhetoric. The bias and unethical reporting were evident from the manner in which the program was conducted, wherein criminal acts committed by individuals were linked to an entire community, as seen while mentioning the rape case in Assam; the reporting insinuated collective guilt. By sensationalising isolated events and weaving them into a broader, misleading story of cultural warfare, the programme fostered communal animosity. This deliberate framing not only distorted facts but also served the interests of divisive ideologies, rather than educating and informing the public in a fair and impartial manner.

The broadcast violated journalistic ethics by failing to uphold truthfulness, fairness, and independence. It contained misleading or selectively edited content that distorted facts to fit a biased narrative. The reporting lacked balance, suppressed opposing viewpoints and favoured particular interests, thereby compromising its integrity. Sensationalism, unverified claims, and a lack of accountability further eroded credibility, as no corrective measures were taken to address misinformation.

Instead of presenting a balanced and impartial report, the coverage was designed to align with the interests of a specific group, reinforcing its beliefs while suppressing counterarguments.

The broadcast failed to ensure a full and fair presentation of news by solely amplifying an alarmist and communal narrative about Bengali Muslims without incorporating diverse perspectives or factual counterpoints. Instead of maintaining an impartial stance, the anchor manipulated language and selectively highlighted incidents to construct a misleading narrative of Hindu culture being under siege. Further, by using emotionally charged phrases such as “*Jibadi syndicate*” and “*communal conspiracy*,” the show actively promoted fear and hostility rather than fostering balanced discourse.

Submissions of the Broadcaster

The impugned broadcast concerned the arrest of Altaf Husaain. The anchor further reported on the song, “Desh ta tomarbapemaki,” written and composed by Altaf Hussain. During this song, the Chief Minister of Assam made a statement. In the broadcast, a debate was held on the statement and whether it was correct or not.

From 2:44 to 2:45, the broadcast began with the anchor merely narrating how a singer by the name of Altaf Hussain, belonging to the Miya community, a resident of Dhubri Village, Assam, had been arrested by the police for the offences of promoting enmity between two religious groups as well as insulting religion and religious practices. The anchor further narrated the prompt action taken by the Assam Government in the matter.

Thereafter, from 2:56 to 3:16, the anchor further reports on the song written and composed by Altaf Hussain, which led to his arrest. This segment runs from 3:20 to 3:39. The anchor also reports that the lyrics and song were widely used during protests in Bangladesh and were composed by Bangladeshi playback singer Mousumi Chowdhury.

The anchor then discusses the origins of the 'Miya' community. Thereafter, between 04:2 and 04:52, the anchor states how, statistically, Vidhan Sabha was being impacted. Between 5:25 to 5:37, the anchor reports on a rape case of a minor in Assam, in which all the accused belonged to the 'Miya' community.

Subsequently, the news segment reports on the history of the festival of Onam in Kerala. Therefore, the impugned broadcast was a lengthy episode that discussed the origin of the song, the purpose of using the song in Bangladesh, its usage in Assam, the consequent arrest of the singer by the authorities, the statement made by the Chief Minister of Assam and raised questions in the national interest.

The impugned episode was neither intended to polarise citizens nor to spread any negative propaganda, or to encourage violence against any class of people in the country. It is respectfully stated that the issues raised by the broadcasts are very important and their discussion will inevitably lead to the posing of questions that may be uncomfortable for certain parties. However, the mere fact that such questions or responses may annoy or cause irritation cannot render them violative of any fundamental principles.

It reiterated that the broadcast must be viewed in its entirety rather than in a fragmented manner. Selectively isolating sentences or phrases without considering the broader context in which they were made could lead to misinterpretation of the content. The channel had exercised due diligence and caution in airing the facts in the public domain. Further, none of the broadcasts in question violates any code of ethics, rules, or regulations in any manner whatsoever, as alleged by the complainant.

Decision

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

NBDSA noted that the story revolved around the arrest of Mr. Altaf Hussain related to the song which he had written in Assamese and publicised. There may be some offending lines in the said song (though NBDSA is not making any comments or expressing its views thereupon) as he was arrested and even the Chief Minister of Assam raised objections to some of the lyrics of the song. FIR has been lodged and the case would take its own course. Therefore, covering the news relating to his song and subsequent arrest was within the prerogative of the broadcaster.

NBDSA also does not find it objectionable on the part of the broadcaster to report related to the objection to the said song namely that Mr. Altaf was attempting to “change Bihu into Miya Bihu” and was derogatory to Assamese culture, as in doing so the broadcaster was stating the views of certain persons including the Chief Minister.

Had the coverage been within the four corners of the aforesaid narrative, there could not have been any objection. However, NBDSA found that the narrative built by the anchor went much beyond that. In the process, the anchor brings a stereotype in respect of a particular community which could clearly have been avoided. The anchor also connects the song with an incident of rape, though there was no causal connection and the two things are altogether separate and distinct. It seems the anchor had a particular agenda in mind and got this opportunity to build his narrative, bearing in mind the said agenda. It is this generalisation which falls foul of the NBDSA’s Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards as well as the Specific Guidelines for Anchors conducting Programmes including Debates.

NBDSA therefore expects the channel and the anchor to cover news programmes within the confines of the Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards and Specific Guidelines for Anchors conducting Programmes including Debates. NBDSA also directs the broadcaster to modulate the programme by removing the offending portions.

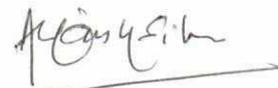
NBDSA further directs the broadcasters to send the link of the broadcast after removing the offending portion, which should be confirmed to NBDSA in writing within 7 days of the Order.

NBDSA decided to close the complaint with the above 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 : 02.12.2025