

News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority

Order No. 212 (2026)

Complainant: Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade, Mr. Utkarsh Mishra, and Mr. Syed Kaab Rashidi

Channel: Zee News

Programme: "ट्रक पर नमाज...जम्मू में नया बवाल शुरू!" नया बवाल शुरू!"

Complaint dated 04.03.2025 filed by Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade

Since the complainant was not satisfied with the response received from the broadcaster, the complaint was escalated to the second level of redressal, i.e., NBDSA, on 19.03.2025.

In the impugned broadcast, the following headlines were aired: "*Truck par namaz, highway kiya jam*" and "*Khadi rahi gaadiya, log hue pareshan*".

In the impugned broadcast, it was stated that the highway was jammed because a truck driver decided to stop his truck in the middle of the highway to offer Namaz. The driver did not care at all. The other side of the highway was empty because no one was offering Namaz there like this driver, or else there would have been a similar jam. In the end, the reporter stated that the broadcaster has not verified this video.

The complainant stated that Alt News had fact-checked the report and confirmed that the Srinagar-Jammu Highway was blocked due to severe weather conditions and a landslide, not because a truck driver decided to stop his truck in the middle of the highway to offer prayers. The truck driver, while waiting for the blockade to clear, had offered prayers without causing any further inconvenience to anyone.

By airing an unverified video and wrongly blaming a Muslim truck driver for being careless and for blocking the highway by praying in the middle of the highway, the broadcaster had violated the Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards, specifically Accuracy, the Guidelines related to Religious Stereotyping, and Corrigendum.

Complaint dated 06.03.2025 filed by Mr. Utkarsh Mishra

Since the complainant did not receive a response from the broadcaster, within the time period stipulated under the News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Regulations, the complaint was escalated to the second level of redressal on 07.04.2025.



The complainant stated that, through this complaint, he sought to bring to the broadcaster's attention the violation of the NBDSA guidelines and the misinformation aired in the impugned broadcast.

In the impugned broadcast, an instance of a Muslim offering Namaz on the highway was reported as the cause of a traffic jam, when in fact the jam had already occurred earlier due to a landslide.

The impugned statements promoting this misinformation is given below

0:00 -0:40 जम्मूकश्मीर से हैरान कर देने वाला एक मामला सामने आया है दरअसल यहां पर हाईवे पर ट्रक की छत पर ड्राइवर ने नमाज अदा की जिससे वहां पर जाम की स्थिति हो गई और ट्रक ड्राइवर इस बात से बिल्कुल बेफिक्र नजर आया हाईवे पर ट्रक खड़ा है और उसके ऊपर ड्राइवर नमाज अदा करते हुए आपको नजर आ रहा होगा ड्राइवर की वजह से बीच हाईवे जाम लगा और गाड़ियों से उतर कर लोग उसे देखते नजर आए हाईवे की दूसरी तरफ आपको बिल्कुल खाली सड़क नजर आएगी क्योंकि उस पर इस ड्राइवर की तरह किसी ने नमाज अदा नहीं की वरना वहां भी स्थिति कुछ इस तरह होती बताया जा रहा है कि ड्राइवर गांदर बल के रामबन से ट्रक लेकर जा रहा था इस दौरान नमाज पढ़ने का समय हुआ तो उसने ट्रक को साइड में नहीं लगाकर बीच हाईवे नमाज अदा की

0:40 - 0:50 इस वायरल वीडियो की पुष्टि ज़ी न्यूज़ नहीं करता है लेकिन सोशल मीडिया पर जिसने भी इस वीडियो को देखा उसने ट्रक ड्राइवर के खिलाफ कार्रवाई की मांग जरूर की है

The complainant stated that the broadcaster itself had verified that a landslide caused the traffic jam in another broadcast. The attempt to communalize a traffic jam violated the Guidelines to Prevent Communal Colour in Reporting Crime, Riots, Rumours and Such Related Incidents and Sub-section 6 of Fundamental Principles and the Principles of Self-regulation related to Ensuring Neutrality and Impartiality and Objectivity in the Code of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards.

Complaint dated 19.03.2025 filed by Mr. Syed Kaab Rashidi

On 4.03.2025, the broadcaster aired a video showing a truck driver offering Namaz (Islamic prayers) atop his vehicle in the Ramban area of Jammu and Kashmir. In the broadcast, it was claimed that the driver's act of offering prayers in the middle of the road, rather than pulling over to the side, had caused a massive traffic Jam, resulting in inconvenience to commuters.

The anchors hosting the news segment played the video on repeat and said that on the opposite, or another, side of the road, there was no traffic because, unlike this truck driver, nobody else stopped there for prayers and held up the passage of other vehicles. It was also stated that, although the broadcaster had not verified the video, everyone who had seen this news on social media had demanded strict action against the truck driver.

To verify the authenticity of this new clip, the complainant stated that he had searched for keywords and found several related posts on Facebook and on fact-checking sites such as Alt News. However, when the video was examined closely, it was evident that there was traffic congestion even ahead of the truck, whose driver was praying. So clearly, the traffic jam was not caused by the driver stopping for prayers. Rather, he himself was stuck in the congestion.

The complainant stated that he had checked the traffic updates in the Ramban area around March 2 and found several advisories shared by the Jammu and Kashmir traffic police's X handle. Since February 27, traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway saw several disruptions due to adverse weather conditions and landslides. On February 28, the handle even posted that part of a road in Ramban had caved in. The advisories make it clear that there was some suspension of vehicular movement and a hold-up in traffic between March 1 and 3 due to restoration work and single-lane passage of traffic.

The paramount duty of a news outlet is to verify information before broadcasting it on the news channel, because the media is a key part of the information ecosystem. If it simply resorts to resharing/forwarding viral content carelessly, there is a risk that the system will turn into an echo chamber of misinformation and hate.

Such captioned misinformation was aired with the intent to spread hatred, so that the viewers of captioned news, construe that the people of the minority community (especially Muslims) are very irresponsible and they are trying to dominate the majority community of the country by praying and capturing the roads of the entire country.

Response dated 19.03.2025 and 10.04.2025 of the broadcaster

In the complaints, various false, misleading, and frivolous allegations had been raised regarding the content of its news programme published on 03.03.2025. At the outset, it denied each and every allegation, averment, and insinuation made in the complaint, as they were entirely false, frivolous, unfounded, and misleading.

The broadcaster denies all the averments/allegations made in the complaints, except those which are specifically admitted herein below.

In reply to the merits of the complaint, it is pertinent to note that its coverage of this incident was based entirely on a viral video circulating on social media. In the video, the individual is seen offering Namaz, and the footage rapidly gained widespread attention online. Its editorial team decided to cover this video as part of its broader reporting on viral content, aimed to address public interest and shed light on an event widely discussed.

The complainant, Mr. Ghorpade, had stated that Alt News conducted a fact check and concluded that the Srinagar-Jammu highway was blocked due to adverse weather conditions and a landslide. The link provided by the complainant included a tweet from Mr. Mohammad Zubair and a video in which an individual claims that Zee News never reports on the difficulties faced by truck drivers who get stuck on the highway for extended periods due to bad weather. The individual also asserts that the broadcaster had erroneously reported that a person offering Namaz on a truck caused a traffic jam and subsequent delays, which he contends is inaccurate.

It stated that the video in question did not substantiate the claims raised by the complainant. The individual featured in the video failed to explain the actual cause of the traffic jam that day. Instead, he merely mentioned that trucks often become stranded due to landslides and adverse weather conditions, which may indeed cause disruptions. However, the video it broadcast clearly showed an individual offering Namaz on his truck, with vehicles stalled behind him and people exiting their vehicles to observe him. Additionally, it had made it clear in its coverage that the video was viral and its authenticity had not been independently verified at the time of broadcast. This was explicitly communicated to ensure transparency with its audience, and the video was not presented as factual or confirmed.

Further, it reiterated that it had clearly stated in its coverage that the authenticity of the video could not be confirmed at the time of broadcasting. Both in the show's packaging and in its anchor's commentary, it was abundantly clear that the video in question was viral and that its authenticity had not been verified. This was communicated transparently to its viewers and aligned with its ethical approach to covering viral content, ensuring it did not present the video as factual or verified.

Concerning the allegation of violating NBDSA's Code of Ethics, specifically concerning Accuracy, religious stereotyping, and the requirement for a corrigendum, the broadcaster categorically denied any violation. Its editorial team had adhered to the highest standards of journalistic integrity by ensuring that the viral nature of the video was fully disclosed to its audience. Its coverage focused on the fact that the video was circulating widely and that it had not made any claims or presented any biased opinions related to the individual's religious or personal background.

That as for the concerns regarding religious stereotyping were concerned, it asserted that its coverage was neutral and focused on the public's reaction to a viral incident, without any attempt to sensationalize or stereotype any religious community. Its intention was never to create divisiveness, but rather to report on a video that had gained considerable attention. It is fully aware of the sensitivities surrounding such incidents and had taken every step to avoid perpetuating any harmful stereotypes.

In respect of the complaint filed by Mr. Syed Kaab Rashidi, the broadcaster, before dealing with the allegations raised in the complaint, stated that the present complaint is not maintainable, inasmuch as the same was *prima facie* barred by limitation. The impugned program was first published on 03.03.2025, and as such, the limitation to file a complaint against the impugned publication expired on 18.03.2025. However, the complainant filed the complaint on 19.03.2024, i.e., after a delay of 1 day, and no explanation/reasons for the said delay have been furnished by the complainant in his complaint. As such, the present complaint was hopelessly barred by limitation and was liable to be dismissed.

In respect to the allegation raised by Mr. Rashidi that the caption mentioned in the program spread misinformation with intent to spread hate is denied in totality. Its editorial team had adhered to the highest standards of journalistic integrity by ensuring that the viral nature of the video was fully disclosed to our audience. Its coverage and the title of the video focused on the fact that the video was circulating widely, and it had not made any claims or present any biased opinions related to the individual's religious or personal background.

It stands by the ethical standards followed in its coverage of this incident. In view of the above, it stated that it had abided by the principles of news reporting, broadcasting, and journalistic norms, and that the complainants had failed to establish any deviations therefrom. Thus, the complaints ought to be dismissed at the outset.

Complaint dated 19.03.2025 to NBDSA filed by Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade

The channel responded to his grievance, denying that it had committed any violations and discrediting the fact-checking source provided. The broadcaster's team was not present on the ground and did not collect any testimonies from people stuck in the traffic jam, nor from local authorities, to try to identify the cause of the jam. The broadcaster had used a clipped portion of a video showing the truck driver offering Namaz on the top of his truck and blamed him for blocking the national highway.

However, when the full video shared on social media is viewed, it becomes clear that traffic was blocked in front of the truck as well, indicating that the truck driver was not causing the traffic jam but was himself stuck in it.

The Alt News fact check contains advisories that make it clear that there was some suspension of vehicular movement and a traffic jam between March 1 and 3 due to restoration work and single-lane passage of traffic. Hindustan Times, ANI and regional news outlets on March 2 also reported this.

The broadcaster's team was incapable of fact-finding—an essential duty of a news media channel and an obligation under the NBDSA's Code of Ethics. Instead, it had used clipped portions of viral videos to spread fake news and hatred against the Muslim community. Simply stating at the end of the report that it had not verified the authenticity of the video was not enough when the presenters confidently promoted the self-manufactured, fake, and communal news throughout the report.

Even after informing the broadcaster that they had misreported and violated the Code of Conduct, the broadcaster refused to remove the video and to air a clarification, as required by the Code of Conduct.

Complaint dated 23.04.2025 filed by Mr. Syed Kaab Rashidi to NBDSA

The complainant submitted that the broadcaster's response dated 10.04.2025 was not satisfactory, as it had evasively denied all the contents of the complaint.

The absolute duty of all news media is to maintain the highest standards of Accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, and neutrality while broadcasting the news. However, the broadcaster failed to adhere to the Code of Ethics and guidelines of NBDSA.

The viral video was broadcast without any verification and, as a result, amplified baseless communal claims that a truck driver offering Namaz caused a major traffic jam. In reality, the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was closed due to poor weather and landslides, leading to traffic congestion.

Such captioned misinformation and such type of fake & biased news were persistently aired in the past as well, with the intent to spread hatred, so that the viewers of this captioned news may construe that the people of the minority community (especially Muslims) are very irresponsible. They are trying to dominate the majority community of the country by praying and capturing the roads of the entire country.

He would like to draw attention to the fact that NBDSA has passed around 27 orders against the broadcaster since 2019, pertaining to the broadcast of biased news.

Decision of NBDA at its meeting held on 14.10.2025

NBDSA noted that it had received three complaints regarding a broadcast on Zee News that alleged the highway was jammed after a truck driver stopped his truck in the middle of the highway to offer Namaz.

At the outset, NBDSA considered the issue of delay. In view of the fact that it was already seized of a complaint concerning the same broadcast filed by Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade, NBDSA condoned the delay of one day on the part of Mr. Syed Kaab

Rashidi in filing the complaint at the first level of redressal and the delay of two days on the part of Mr. Utkarsh Mishra in escalating the complaint to the second level of redressal.

Accordingly, NBDSA considered the complaints, and response of the broadcaster and 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

Mr. Utkarsh Mishra

Broadcaster

Ms. Annie, Compliance Officer, NBDSA

It may be noted that Mr. Syed Kaab Rashidi (Legal Advisor of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind) did not attend the hearing.

Submission of the Parties

The complainants submitted that in the impugned broadcast, it was reported that a highway was jammed because a truck driver had decided to stop his vehicle in the middle of the highway to offer Namaz. In reality, the highway was jammed due to severe weather conditions and a landslide; however, the channel depicted it as being obstructed because an individual was offering Namaz in the middle of the highway.

The complainant further stated that this was contrary to the channel's own reporting, in which it had, in another broadcast, shown the highway as jammed due to a landslide. Further, this news was fact-checked by several credible platforms, including Altnews, which ran a fact-check and confirmed that the Srinagar-Jammu Highway was blocked due to severe weather conditions and a landslide, not because a truck driver had stopped his truck in the middle of the highway to offer prayers.

In response, the broadcaster submitted that it is pertinent to note that the coverage of this incident was based entirely on a viral video circulating on social media. In the video, the individual is seen offering Namaz, and the footage rapidly gained widespread attention online. Its editorial team had decided to cover this video as part of its broader reporting on viral content, to address the public interest and shed light on an event that was being widely discussed. The reporter clarified during the broadcast that Zee News had not verified the video. Additionally, upon realizing that the video was fake, the impugned broadcast was immediately deleted.

Decision

NBDSA considered the complaints, response of the broadcaster and gave due consideration to the arguments of the parties.

NBDSA noted that during the hearing, the broadcaster admitted that the impugned broadcast was based on a viral video circulating on social media platforms. Further, the reporter acknowledged on record that the broadcaster had not verified the veracity of the video at the time of the broadcast.

NBDSA was of the view that using unverified content available on social media is a clear lapse on the part of the broadcaster, which is also serious in nature and is in violation of the principle of Accuracy enshrined under the Code of Conduct, which Members are expected to adhere to prior to telecasting/publishing any content.

Having regard to the nature of the violation, NBDSA would have imposed heavy penalty. However, in view of the subsequent deletion of the impugned video by the broadcaster itself, NBDSA decided to impose a fine of Rs. 1,00,000 on the broadcaster.

NBDSA further noted that it has observed broadcasters/digital news publishers are using content and information widely circulated on social media as sources for their broadcasts/publications. While social media can be instrumental in gathering and reporting information, it also carries the risk of spreading distorted information, misinformation, fake news and AI-generated content, including deepfakes. Any information/news gathered from social media must be used only in strict adherence to the principles enshrined in the Code of Conduct. Therefore, it is deemed appropriate to issue the following guidelines to the Members of NBDA:

In addition to the Guidelines already in existence, Broadcasters and Digital News Publishers should ensure adherence to the following standards while using content available on social media:

1. All information, images and/or videos gathered from social media must be verified by the Member to be accurate before broadcasting/publishing.
2. Wherever possible, all such information, images and/or videos should be corroborated by on-ground reporting and from other reliable sources, such as eyewitness testimonies, police and government official accounts.
3. As far as feasible, the authenticity of the images and/or videos should be fact-checked for distortion/manipulation and/or for being AI-generated.

4. Content should not be presented out of context as reporting information, images and videos, which, although authentic, but out of context may lead to misinformation.
5. Furthermore, any use of content on social media while reporting any news relating to any military operation, armed conflict, internal disturbance, communal violence, public disorder, crime and other similar situations should be tested on the touchstone of "public interest" AND "accuracy".
6. Merely disclaiming that the image or video is circulating on social media and that its authenticity cannot be verified will not absolve the Member of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct.

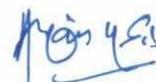
NBDSA decided that the aforementioned Guidelines should be circulated amongst the Members and Editors of NBDA for strict compliance.

NBDSA decided to close the complaints with the aforesaid observations and inform the complainants and 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