

News

Zee News & Times Now Navbharat Is Blocked by NBDSA Due to "Mehendi Jihad" and "Love Jihad" Broadcasts



After determining that Zee News' shows on "**Mehendi Jihad**" violated the Code of Ethics, the News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority (NBDSA), led by Justice (Retd.) A.K. Sikri, chastised the network and ordered the recordings to be taken down from social media.

In a different ruling, the NBDSA criticized Times Now **Navbharat** for using some offensive tickers on "Love Jihad" when they were reporting a court ruling in a case involving illegal conversion. The NBDSA ordered the tickers to be removed after determining that they

introduced certain aspects that were not included in the verdict.

The orders followed complaints made by activist **Indrajeet Ghorpade in October 2024, who claimed that the networks aired divisive propaganda and disseminated false information.**

"Mehendi Jihad" Broadcasts on Zee News

Four shows that promoted the notion of a purported "Mehendi Jihad" were the subject of the complaint against Zee News. According to the reports, Muslim men pretended to be mehendi artists in order to get the phone numbers of Hindu women with the intention of marrying and converting them, while Muslim mehendi artists allegedly spat into mehendi before applying it to Hindu women. Additionally, certain groups' calls for a boycott of Muslim Mehendi artists and aggressive chants were emphasized by the programs.

"Mehendi jihad par de dana-dan," "Aawedan nivedan nahi mane toh de dana-dan," "Mehendi jihad ke khilaf lathth model launch," "Lathi se lais rahenge, jihadiyon ko rokenge," and "Pakde jane par sabak sikhaya jayega" were some examples of tickers from the shows.

The complaint claims that Zee News ignored competing views, neglected to fact-check the claims, failed to denounce threats and abuses against Muslim musicians, and helped to incite hatred and fear among communities through its headlines, tickers, and thumbnails. The Authority concluded that the tickers and presentation suggested that the channel was supporting those allegations, even though Zee News had claimed before the NBDSA that it was only reporting remarks made by organizations. In addition to ordering Zee News to take down the shows, the NBDSA "admonished" the channel to be more cautious going forward by presenting opposing viewpoints.

The following order was noted:

"The broadcaster did not clarify that these were statements made by third parties or endorse that these tickers did not reflect the broadcaster's opinions when broadcasting these tickers.

NBDSA noted that it was vital to remind the media of its role as the fourth pillar of democracy in influencing public opinion, even though it is not permitted to comment on the broadcast's content as it is within editorial discretion and is protected by the freedom of speech and expression. It is the responsibility of broadcasters to thoroughly assess the material they transmit when discussing potentially delicate subjects to make sure it complies with the

journalistic standards specified in the Code of Conduct.

"Love Jihad: Times Now Navbharat"

Coverage A Muslim man was sentenced to life in prison by the Bareilly Sessions Court for forcing a Hindu woman into marriage after she converted to Islam. This was the subject of the complaint against Times Now Navbharat.

The complaint alleges that Times Now Navbharat broadcast statements by BJP politicians that supported the "love jihad" narrative, ignored the woman's testimony, and repeated the judge's remarks without doing a journalistic analysis. Tickers like "Pyar ke jahaaz mein jihad ka tufaan," **"Love jihad par court ka sakht faisla," "Jihadiyon ki mohabbat ka sach,"** and **"Jihadiyon ke iraadon par lagi mohar"** also followed the broadcast.

The complainant's claim that the channel ought to have conducted an independent fact-check prior to broadcasting the ruling did not impress the NBDSA.

According to the NBDSA, the broadcasts recounted the court's conclusions, which would not be offensive in and of itself. Nevertheless, it discovered that Times Now Navbharat included other aspects through dramatic tickers, going beyond the judgment's story. The Authority also cited the use of captions that "did not fit the intended subject of the reportage," such as "UP mein Love jihad... toolkit Pakistani" and **"Jhutte naam ka afsana, maksad musalman banana."**

"The broadcaster went beyond the narrative in the judgment and introduced certain elements, which are not part of the judgment, by using the tickers...which did not fit the intended subject of the reportage," the Authority noted when telecasting a factual narration. As a result, the channel was instructed to eliminate the offending tickers. It also came to the conclusion that the narration of the verdict itself had not broken the Code of Ethics & Broadcasting, save from these subtitles.