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Not the first attack by Hindu Samrajya Sena

BJP, Congress condemn vandalism at NDTV office in Ahmedabad

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AHMEDABAD Saturday's attack on the NDTV Ahmedabad office by "Hindu Samrajya Sena" activists has been condemned by almost all sections, including leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and other Sangh Parivar outfits.

A Bajrang Dal spokesman said the Sena had nothing to do with his organisation. The Sena leader, Ashok Sharma, against whom NDTV has lodged a police complaint, was once an activist of the Dal, but he was thrown out of it several years ago, he said.

The attackers were protesting against the channel including painter M.F. Husain in its SMS poll for award of Bharat Ratna.

This was not the first time the Sena targeted the painter. About eight years ago, the "Doshi-Husain Gufa" on the Gujarat University campus, named after architect Balkrishna Doshi and Mr. Husain, was vandalised by the Sena activists. They were protesting against alleged painting by Mr. Husain of Hindu goddesses in the nude.

According to NDTV sources, a group of Sena activists visited the office a couple of days ago and enquired about reporters. They left on being told that the journalist staff were away in Delhi to attend a bureau conference.

However, the activists, while leaving, told other staff members that they should ask the head office to withdraw



The NDTV office damaged by activists in Ahmedabad. - PHOTO: PTI

Mr. Husain's name from the SMS poll list.

On Saturday morning, the activists came with some banners and posters demanding that NDTV "apologise to the nation" for including the painter in the contest as he was "anti-Hindu." After vandalising the office premises, they put up a banner at the entrance and locked the main gate from outside.

NDTV filed a complaint

with the police against 20 persons besides Ashok Sharma.

PTI reports from New Delhi:

Disapproving of the attack on the NDTV office, BJP president Rajnath Singh said: "Media is the fourth pillar of democracy. Such things should not happen."

Mr. Singh told reporters that he was confident that Chief Minister Narendra Mo-

di would order a probe and take appropriate action.

Intolerance: Congress

Deploring the "climate of intolerance," Congress spokesman Abhishek Singhvi said: "If you cannot air your views with freedom, then it is a very sorry phase you have come to. Ultimately this is what fascism is all about. This is what intolerance is all about."