

Sting Operation Catches Stars Agreeing To Promote Political Parties For Cash

NEW DELHI: More than 30 Indian film and TV industry actors/artists agreed to spread the propaganda of political parties through their social media accounts for money, which they asked to be paid in cash, in other words in untaxed black money, it has been revealed in a sting operation.

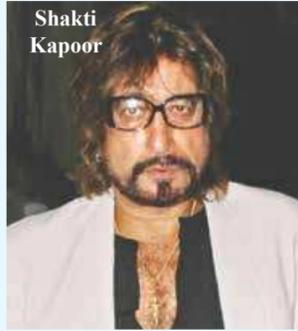
Actors Vivek Oberoi, Shakti Kapoor, Jackie Shroff, Amisha Patel, Mahima Chaudhary and Sonu Sood, and singers Kailash Kher, Abhijeet and Mika were some of those caught on camera accepting the deal for toeing the agenda of a political party or endorsing it for money.

The celebrities were caught on camera accepting the cash-for-tweet offer during a sting operation conducted by media portal Cobra Post over a period of 3-4 months last year.

Cobra Post on Tuesday released the sting operation in a video documentary titled 'Operation Karaoke', in which actors, dancers, singers and models were caught accepting the offer for promoting political parties through hidden cameras.



Amisha Patel



Shakti Kapoor



Mahima Chaudhary



Jackie Shroff

The reporters, acting as agents working on behalf of the Congress, the BJP or the Aam Aadmi Party, made an offer to pay 10-20 per cent of the decided sum in cheque or bank transfer, and the rest through cash, which the celebrities accepted.

Vidya Balan, Raza Murad, Arshad Warsi and TV actor Saumya Tandon were the only ones who refused the offer.

Celebrities were offered Rs 2 lakh to Rs 20 lakh per message according to their brand value. Some celebrities even asked the reporters-cum-agents for up to Rs 20 crore citing the sway they hold on the Twitter sphere.

These celebs agreed to pro-

mote the party -- any which was proposed to them -- to create a favourable environment before the 2019 general elections.

They swore to keep the entire exercise a secret and the agenda hidden.

"This way, you (celebrities) are manufacturing an opinion through social media. If you reveal that you have taken money for the promotion that you are doing, it would be fine... If we go by the trend, these people may not shy away from propagating a communal agenda either," said journalist and former Aam Aadmi Party member Ashutosh during the press conference.

He compared the celebrities

who accepted the deal to "trolls" and called trolling a "paid syndicate mafia".

Hartosh Singh Bal, political editor of Caravan magazine, also addressed the reporters and termed the incident a telling foreboding of the "dangerous times" ahead.

"We are going to see the consequences of this in the coming elections," he said.

The impact most of these celebrities can have through their handles in denting or boosting a party's image can be gauged from the number of followers each of them has on Twitter.

Amisha Patel has 3.95 million, Vivek Oberoi above 2 million

and Sonu Sood 1.5 million followers on Twitter. Jackie Shroff has 2.27 lakh, Kailash Kher has over 5 lakh and Tisca Chopra of 'Taare Zameen Par' fame has 3.20 lakh followers on Twitter.

Model and actress Sunny Leone, though one of those agreeing to promote the BJP on camera, issued a disclaimer on Twitter hours after the press conference, rubbishing the news.

"Hi, this is to inform you that I am not campaigning for any political parties... If I choose to promote anything in political life I would choose things I only believe in," she tweeted.

Leone alone has 3.95 million followers on Twitter.

Ali Fazal's 'Milan Talkies' To Be Released On March 15

MUMBAI: Unveiling the first look of film "Milan Talkies" here on Tuesday Ali Fazal announced that it will be released on March 15. Ali uploaded the film's first official poster on Twitter.

"What really hit me was that this boy works at a projection room that is the hub of communication to the outside world in a small city like Allahabad and yet he is unable to communicate his love to girlfriend. It is a story revolving around them in the period when the single screen were making the big shift to the multiplex. It is an unconventional love story," he said in a statement.

Tigmanshu Dhulia-directed "Milan Talkies" also features actress Shraddha Srinath. Dhulia described it as a "beautiful desi romantic love story" set in Uttar Pradesh.

In the film, Ali will be seen playing a filmmaker from Allahabad, while Shraddha will portray his love interest.

"Ali and Shraddha have done a brilliant job. I am really looking



forward to showing the film to the audience. I hope they will like it," Dhulia said.

For his role, Ali cut his weight by 10 kg. "It felt so good to know I could look both buff and lean if I put my heart to it. But I am a lean guy and I am most comfortable in this avatar. It takes a lot of focus and will to do it, especially

the diet part," he had earlier said of his preparation for the film.

The film also stars Ashutosh Rana, Sanjay Mishra, Reecha Sinha and Sikander Kher. Produced by Filmy Keeda Productions in association with Om Prakash Bhatt (Purple Bull Entertainment), its trailer will be out on Wednesday.

Poonam Dhillon Excited To Star In 'Jai Mummy Di'

MUMBAI: Veteran actress Poonam Dhillon will star along with actors Sunny Singh and Sonnalli Seygall in the upcoming film "Jai Mummy Di".

Poonam took to Twitter on Monday morning and wrote: "All who ask when my next film coming - It's time for 'Jai Mummy Di'. Excited to be alongside Supriya Pathak and the wonderful cast of Sunny Singh and Sonnalli Seygall. Directed by Navjot Gulati, wait for July 12."

"Jai Mummy Di", which also stars Supriya Pathak, is a light-hearted family comedy. The dynamics between two mothers is the backdrop of the film.

The film is presented by T-Series, Krishan Kumar. It is produced by Luv Ranjan and Ankur



Garg. "Films like our very own 'Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweetie' and even 'Badhaai Ho' that released last year have proven that there is a big audience for stories which weave in family dynamics interestingly," Ranjan said in a statement. "Jai Mummy Di' is for yours, mine and every other family you see around you," Bhushan added.

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