

The Indian EXPRESS

JOURNALISM OF COURAGE
SINCE 1932

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024, MUMBAI, LATE CITY, 14 PAGES

₹5.00 • WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

PAGE 1 ANCHOR From actors to accused: Contributing to a Mumbai Police fund

MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, JANUARY 1

BOLLYWOOD ACTORS, corporate houses, banks, lawyers and, in some cases, even those against whom Mumbai Police filed chargesheets are in the list of people who contributed to the Mumbai Police Foundation (MPF) between May 2018 and March 2023, according to records obtained by *The Indian Express* under the Right To Information (RTI) Act.

According to the RTI response, a total of Rs 25.49 crore was received in contribution dur-

ing this period, mostly after the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020.

While the celebrity contributors included Akshay Kumar, Rohit Shetty, Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma, there is another set of contributors that raises questions as the MPF fund guidelines clearly state that there should be no conflict of interest or "perception" of conflict of interest while accepting money for the Foundation.

This set of contributors included agrochemical manufacturer United Phosphorus Ltd (UPL), which contributed Rs 1 crore to the MPF in April 2020. This came a year after the

Mumbai Police registered an FIR against the firm for allegedly preparing electronic poll propaganda material for the BJP — an allegation made by the Congress.

The FIR registered on April 16, 2019 at Khar Police Station, North-West Mumbai, following a complaint by the Election Commission, named Raju Shroff, one of the UPL's directors, as accused.

At this point, the BJP-Shiv Sena government led by Devendra Fadnis was ruling the state. When the UPL contributed to the MPF, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) was in power. An officer said the police eventually filed the chargesheet in the case.

FUND FLOW DURING AND AFTER PANDEMIC

CONTRIBUTIONS IN LAST 3 YRS



TOP CONTRIBUTORS

HDFC Bank: ₹4 cr (Nov 25 & Dec 31, 2020)
Warburg Pincus India: ₹2.5 cr (Apr 28, 2020 & Apr 23, 2021)
Akshay Kumar: ₹2 cr (Apr 27, 2020)
United Phosphorus Ltd (UPL): ₹1 cr (Apr 29, 2020)
Tata Sons: ₹1 cr (May 27, 2020)
State Bank of India: ₹1 cr (Mar 15, 2021)

AMONG OTHERS

■ **Producer Rohit Shetty: ₹50 lakh** (2022)
 ■ **Shapeerji Pallonji Finance Pvt Ltd: ₹70 lakh** (2020)
 ■ **Serum Institute of India: ₹50 lakh** (2020)
 ■ **Inox Air Products Pvt Ltd: ₹50 lakh** (2020)
 ■ **SD Corporation: ₹25 lakh** (2020)
 ■ **Godrej Seeds Genetics: ₹25 lakh** (2020)
 ■ **Kamala Raheja Foundation: ₹25 lakh** (2020)

Similarly, the MPF also received a contribution of Rs 10 lakh from India Infoline in April 2020. In 2015, the Mumbai Police, while probing the NSEIL scam case, had arrested three top executives of prominent brokerage firms, including Chintan Modi, the then vice president of India Infoline Commodities Limited (IICL). Modi was subsequently chargesheeted by the economic offences wing of Mumbai Police in 2018.

When asked about possible conflict of interest, a senior police officer, who oversees the MPF fund, said, "In these cases, we had already chargesheeted these people and hence the

probe was no longer in our hands for any contributions to have impact on an ongoing probe. We ensure that we do enquiry about a person's background before we accept donations from them in order to ensure that no one with a dubious background tries to take advantage of this."

While the MPF did not receive any contribution in the 22 months since its formation in May 2018, it witnessed a sudden spurt of flow beginning March 2020, coinciding with the onslaught of Covid-19 which started spreading across the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Actors to accused: Those who contributed to Mumbai Police fund

country and claimed several lives, including those of police personnel.

Between March and December 2020, the MPF received Rs 15.87 crore — or more than 60 per cent of the total corpus of Rs 25.49 crore.

According to the RTI, the biggest individual contributor to the MPF was actor Akshay Kumar, who contributed Rs 2 crore on April 27, 2020, a month into the pandemic. Producer Rohit Shetty, who has made movies featuring the Mumbai Police, contributed Rs 50 lakh in 2022. Others from the film industry who contributed to the MPF were actress Anushka Sharma, who paid Rs 2 lakh on May 6, 2020 and Tiger Shroff who paid Rs 2.5 lakh on May 2, 2020.

Ironically, a year later, the Mumbai Police booked Shroff and actress Disha Patani for violating Covid-19 norms and even put out a tweet from its official handle.

The tweet did not name them but referred to names of movies in which they featured. "In the ongoing 'War' against the virus, going 'Malang' on the streets of Bandra cost dearly to two actors who have been booked under section 188, 34 IPC by Bandra police station," the tweet said. Among others, Excel Entertainment, co-owned by actor-director Farhan Akhtar, contributed Rs 15 lakh on April 30, 2020 while Tips Industries paid Rs 2 lakh on April 27, 2020. Producer/director Dinesh Vijan's Maddock Films contributed Rs 15 lakh to the fund.

Among cricketers, Virat Kohli contributed Rs 3 lakh on May 6, 2020. Among investors, the late Rakesh Jhunjhunwala and his wife Rekha Jhunjhunwala contributed Rs 25 lakh on May 4, 2020. When it came to corporate houses, Warburg Pincus contributed Rs 2.50 crore in two contributions and Tata Sons

contributed Rs 1 crore on May 27, 2020.

HDFC Bank, which holds the salary accounts of the nearly 40,000-strong Mumbai Police, contributed Rs 4 crore — to become the highest contributor. The State Bank of India paid Rs 1 crore. Further, the Rotary Club of Bombay Central Island Trust paid Rs 7.51 lakh while Rotary Club of Malabar Hill paid Rs 11 lakh.

The Mumbai Police itself contributed Rs 6.93 crore to the fund by diverting half the amount collected by fining people for not wearing masks. The other half went to the BMC in 2021.

Another contributor to the fund was M/s MZM Care Foundation — the philanthropic arm of white-collar crime law firm MZM Legal LLP, founded by Zulfiqar M Memon and Suzanne Z Memon. The law firm that is usually crossing swords with the police in courts as defence lawyers

contributed Rs 3 lakh to the MPF.

An officer said, "During the pandemic, people felt they wanted to contribute to frontline workers like police personnel who were putting their lives at risk. There was also a lot of publicity being done by the Mumbai Police that contributions were being accepted via the MPF due to which during the pandemic we received a good response."

"Now the challenge is that after the pandemic we need to publicise the presence of the fund all the more to receive contributions since the response has gone down in the past year," the officer said.

The MPF was set up in 2018 on the lines of the New York City Police Foundation. According to the RTI response, a total of 107 Mumbai Police personnel died of Covid and their kin received Rs 10 lakh each through the MPF. They also got Rs 11 lakh each from the CM Relief Fund.

MUMBAI