

Two arrested for firing at Bollywood superstar's home

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Online Desk: Two members of a notorious criminal gang were arrested by Indian police Tuesday for firing at the home of Bollywood actor Salman Khan in retaliation for the superstar's killing of two antelopes.

The Bishnoi gang, accused of several murders and extortion rackets, hails from a wider desert-based religious sect that considers the species to be the reincarnation of their guru.

Khan, 58, has been in the crosshairs of the group since 1998 for shooting two blackbucks on a recreational hunting trip.

The gang's jailed leader Lawrence Bishnoi has threatened Khan with assassination in the past.

Two men on a motorbike shot at Khan's first-floor apartment during the early hours of Sunday in the upscale Mumbai neighbourhood of Bandra, also firing several rounds in the air before fleeing.

Khan, who is always guarded by armed policemen owing to threats to his life, was home when the gunshots were fired.

The two men aged 24 and 21 were arrested Tuesday in the western state of Gujarat, police told AFP.

"We were able to locate the two accused near a temple," Kutch district police officer Mahendra Bagaria said.

"One of our teams reached the temple and nabbed the accused."

Members of the Bishnoi community pursued a criminal case against Khan for the blackbuck shooting for 20 years.

Khan was sentenced to five years in jail by a local court for violating the Wildlife Protection Act in 2018.

But the penalty was suspended on appeal just days after Khan was sent to prison, prompting Lawrence Bishnoi to warn soon afterwards that his gang would take the law into their own hands.

The gang leader has been accused of orchestrating several murders including the killing of popular Indian rapper Sidhu Moose Wala in 2022.

Khan has starred in nearly 150 films and television shows since his first hit in the 1980s, and remains one of Bollywood's most bankable figures.

But his personal life has long been dogged by controversy.

In 2002 he allegedly ran over five people sleeping on the sidewalk in an upmarket Mumbai neighbourhood, killing one, in a late-night hit-and-run.

He was cleared, but authorities challenged his acquittal in 2016 and the case is still ongoing.