

Sania shoots for ad in Mecca Masjid : Case filed

Monday, 17 December 2007

Shooting of a commercial advertisement featuring Sania Mirza at the historic Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad has sparked a row with the minorities welfare department Tuesday lodging a complaint against her and an advertisement agency. Hyderabad district minority welfare officer Shaikh Kareemullah lodged a complaint with the Hussaini Alam police station against Sania and the agency, as the advertisement was shot allegedly without permission.

Police officials said they received the complaint and the investigations were on. B. Reddanna, assistant commissioner of police, Charminar, however, was not sure whether presence of Sania in the courtyard of the historic mosque and shooting of a film were cognisable offences. 'We are looking into it whether it constitutes a trespass,' he said and pointed out that she did not enter the main building but remained in the courtyard. Sania or her parents were not available for comment.

Kareemullah also filed a detailed report to the secretary of minority welfare department recommending action against the employees of the mosque, who failed to stop the shooting.

The ad was shot Monday without the permission of the department, which is responsible for the upkeep of the 17th century mosque. The shooting also evoked protest from the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM), a powerful Muslim political party in the Muslim-majority old city. MIM and some locals objected to the shooting and Sania's participation in it.

The advertisers had informed the police about the shooting and Sania's arrival but did not bother to take permission from the minorities welfare department. The police reportedly used mild force twice to disperse locals objecting to the shooting.

The mosque employees said the attitude of some of the members of shooting unit was also objectionable. They were reportedly wearing shoes when they entered the mosque and pushed away a mosque watchman who tried to stop them. Khaja Nayeemuddin, superintendent of the mosque, said he had no information about the film shooting. The two-hour shooting was over before the mosque custodians could reach the spot. The mosque officials pointed out that the shooting of films and commercials was not permitted in the mosque premises.