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Beware of impostors

Jan 02, 2015 - Aditi Pancholi And Saumya Bhatia



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A still from The Imposter. (Picture is used for illustrative purposes only)

Celebs are often easy targets for impostors who create their fake email and social media accounts. Cyber experts suggest what can be done to stay safe in the virtual space.

Bollywood hunk Hrithik Roshan and filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali recently filed complaints against an impostor who created fake email accounts in their names. Reportedly, the impostor also chatted with people on social networking sites, inviting entries for auditions. Earlier too there have been similar cases where celebrities have fallen prey in the hands of cyber criminals. A fake account of actor Aamir Khan was created on Instagram to which the actor clarified that any account in his name on the online photo-sharing website was "fake." Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt had warned his fans against a fake Facebook account created under his name and actress Alia Bhatt also went through the trouble of clarifying that she has no account on Facebook. Similarly, actress-singer, Priyanka Chopra found a fake Twitter profile of her cousin Mannara. We asked tech experts about what can be done to curb this menace prevalent in the virtual world.

To avoid becoming potential victims of cybercrime, cyber law expert Pavan Duggal, says, "Internet is a very fertile field which will always allow intrinsic new capacities and capabilities for impostors to keep on misusing the network." Turn to Page 22

Pavan adds, "However, we need to consciously follow certain dos and don'ts to prevent harm from such impostors. People must routinely search for their names online and especially on social networking sites. There are various search engines available which will allow you to monitor all mentions made about you on social media.

Adopting this methodology will enable you to be sensitive to what is being written by you, about you or people acting as impostors. If you find somebody who has created fake emails and social media accounts in your name, you must immediately report the matter to the police. You can report to your local police station else you can even send an email to the official website of your state police. Further, you should also write to social networking sites asking them to disable such account on the ground that the said account is an impostor.

You should also post it on your social media account that some unknown person is acting as impostor on the indicated links so that you can make people more aware that they do not get exploited by the illegal designs of the impostors. One should not give one's username and password to any other third person. People need to realise that acting as an impostor tantamount to offence punishable with three years imprisonment and fine under Section 66C of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

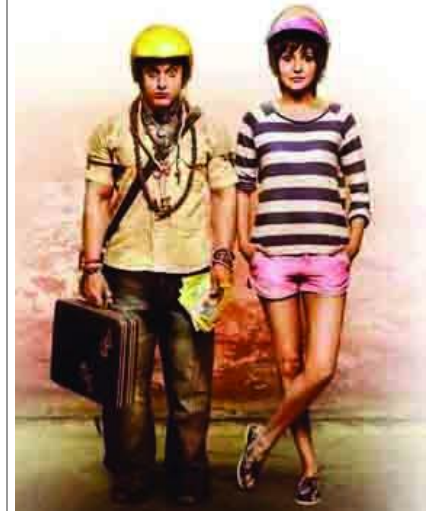
Being active in the virtual world comes with pros and cons. "There is nothing that can guard you completely in the virtual space, so there is no such concept

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Columnists

A homage to the Indian Army



Shankar Roychowdhury

The Indian Army observes January 15 as Army Day every year to commemorate that day in 1949 when Lt. Gen. (later Field Marshal) K.M.

Time for a rethink?

of absolute security. Cyber criminals are prowling all around; so the onus is on us as individuals to ensure that don't become victims of cybercrime. One should not leave one's details about one's identity on websites, unless you are absolutely convinced about the trustworthiness of the said website. We should not post details about our identity and personal likes and dislikes on social media websites. We should post only that information about our life, which is necessary. It's advisable not to share our personal photographs as impostors could potentially use the same. We should constantly be alive to the realisation that we could be made a potential victim of cybercrime. One should as far as possible also engage in conduct of having two IDs, anonymous ID and personal ID online," says tech expert Rahul Aggarwal.

Rakshit Tandon, a cyber security expert and consultant Safe Surfing Campaign at Internet and Mobile Association of India, recently handled a case of a well-known photographer from Mumbai whose fake Skype id was created.

"Someone created a Skype account of this famous photographer and started chatting with aspiring models asking them to come over for auditions. When this photographer got to know of this fake id, he contacted us and it was blocked. There's an increase in such instances related to celebrities. Another recent impostor incident involved a famous RJ in Kanpur, whose Facebook account was compromised. The most recent incident is of Patna's SP Shivdeep Waman Lande, whose fake Facebook account was created and the impostor duped a Jaipur girl of `51,000," shares Rakshit.

Upon asking if it's easy to steal someone's identity online, Rakshit points out, "With customised free email service provided by search engines it's easy to create anyone's id. Anyone can create a fake account on free email service. To control this menace, social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter started verifying accounts of celebrities and prominent faces. So, now, these profiles show they're verified and carry a blue tick as well. Users online should be aware of this and not start adding or interacting with fake celeb account users thinking they're originals. If you don't see a verified sign, stay away." He adds, "There's no harm in creating a fan page of a celebrity, but it must say so.

Impostors don't shy away from playing with feelings of people, they're also duping innocent people of money. It's still difficult to track fake emails, but social networking sites have strong verification system and also have options for users to report an account if it seems misguided or spam, and online users should make use of it and be aware."



S. Nihal Singh

What happened at the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo was condemnable without reserve and the world's media, including in India, have risen in solidarity.

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