

Percept Picture Company Bags Khuda Kay Liye for Indian Theatres

With the official release of **Khuda Kay Liye** from across the border in the Indian theatres next month after a gap of about four decades, Pakistan has opened the business avenues for the world's one of the largest entertainment industry, but on a barter basis to protect its own industry from flooding of Indian films in Pakistani cinemas.

With the lifting of ban for exchange of films between the two countries, the Pakistan Government has allowed it with a condition that films will be strictly 'exchanged'. This is, for each Hindi title released in Pakistan, an Urdu film will have to be exhibited in India.

In 1968, the release of Indian films in Pakistani cinemas were banned and Pakistan lost one of its competitors. The net result was a loss of large business circuit and isolation of Pakistani cinema industry for years to come.

Khuda Kay Liye, Produced and Directed by Shoaib Mansoor, a film about Muslims in a post-9/11 world is slated to open in India on April 4, 2008, making it the first ever Pakistani film to be released in Indian theaters by **Percept Picture Company** and music by **Sony BMG** marking a new chapter in improving cultural and bilateral relations between the two countries.

Pakistan and India might have their long-held differences, but Pakistani moviegoers prefer the productions of India's "Bollywood" moviemakers to those of their own filmmakers. As a result, Pakistani producers say their industry is in critical condition, and unless the government steps in, it could disappear altogether.

The opening of dialogue and political doors to establish new ties and improve bilateral relations will promote cross border co-production possibilities that can hugely benefit Pakistani film industry by eyeing India as new potential market to launch its films.

Khuda Kay Liye, with India's Naseeruddin Shah also in a prominent role, is the latest export from Pakistan to Bollywood adding on to the ever increasing list of entertainment goods imported from Pakistan such as singers musicians, actors and now films.

As compared to India's film production of over 1000 movies in a year, Pakistan's film industry produced just 40 movies in 2006, a fifth of what it turned out during its heyday in the 1970's. Back then, there were more than 1,000 movie theaters throughout the country. Today, there are only around 200, and not one in the capital, Islamabad.

The main reason is that Pakistanis prefer films from their neighbour and rival, India, which higher production values than the Pakistani product.

In the 1930's when Pakistan and India were still united under British Rule, there were two competing centers of the film industry. Lahore, in what is known as Lollywood in Pakistan, and Bombay, now known as Mumbai, the home of India's fabulously successful "Bollywood" filmmakers.

These days, of course, there is little question who won the competition. Bollywood is not just big, it is the world's biggest, producing more films per year than any of its competitors including the United States. Its movies are slick and lavishly produced. It is hard for the Pakistanis to compete.

The thawing relations look set to go both ways and both countries are working hard on a sweeping peace process.

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