

## Shah Rukh is king in world of business too

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan has no equals in the Hindi film industry and now his business acumen seems set to overshadow that of India's tycoons.

New Delhi, April 20 (IANS) Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan has no equals in the Hindi film industry and now his business acumen seems set to overshadow that of India's tycoons.

Shah Rukh has already got the biggest bang out of each penny that he has so far sunk into Indian Premier League (IPL), the richest domestic cricket tournament in the world.

To begin with, he bagged [Kolkata](#) Knight Riders for only \$75.09 million as against the \$111.9 million that industrialist Mukesh Ambani paid for [Mumbai](#) and the \$111.6 million that liquor baron Vijay Mallya spent for [Bangalore](#) team. And in the bargain he also got the country's best stadium and the most fanatical fans.

Then when the players went up for auctions, it was Shah Rukh who ended up paying less for the entire team than all the business magnates and their army of advisors.

Advised by Kolkata Knight Riders' team captain Saurav Ganguly, who himself hails from a business family, Shah Rukh built up a team, which comprised Ishant Sharma, Chris Gayle, Shoaib Akhtar, Ricky Pointing and world's fastest scorer Brendon McCullum, without going overboard on the finances front.

While Delhi spent \$675,000 for youngster Manoj Tewari who has played only one international one-day, Australian captain Ricky Ponting went to Kolkata for only \$400,000.

Not one to take things easy, the actor who is often described as a powerhouse of energy by his co-workers, set out to promote his Knight Riders in all earnestness. Known as the King Khan, he was the first to unleash a media blitzkrieg to build the hype around his team.

This included recording a song in his own voice and in Kolkata's native language titled 'Korbo Lorbo Jeetbo' (Do, Fight, Win) and filming a typical Bollywood-style video to go with it. Replete with a zillion decked-up extras swarming Shah Rukh and a little bit of cricket thrown-in, the music and its video were both well received.

Shah Rukh's team then brought a range of sponsors on board that included the sizable basket of brands that he endorses - Nokia, Tag Heuer watches and Belmonte - in addition to a brick and mortar company and even a jewellery brand.

These were -- Housing Development and Infrastructure (HDIL), The Telegraph, Reebok, T-Series and Getanjali Group, the latter has created gold and diamond studded helmets, which will go to the best player in matches involving the actor's team.

For adding value to his long-term association with Nokia, he even launched a music album called 'Nokia 2 Hot 2 Cool' along with music distributor and co-sponsor T-Series.

The noise that Knight Riders was making even before the games began had not gone

uncommented upon.

Vijaya Mallya, whose team was the first to go up against Shah Rukh's, said: 'Shah Rukh Khan is a superstar and I am not. But his stardom will not count on the cricket field. It will all depend on which team plays a better game.'

But increasing the visibility and recall value of Kolkata Knight Riders, seems to have gone in Khan's favour. Moreover, with his team triumphing over Mallya's Bangalore Royal Challenge in the opening match of the IPL, he has silenced all his critics who were sceptical about making a song and dance about a game.

All media is now abuzz with details of how grand the upcoming matches in Eden Garden are going to be and the list of top Bollywood beauties, who will fly down to Kolkata to show solidarity with the actor, is growing by the day.

Shah Rukh sure knows how to put up a good show. Though he comes from a middle-class family that had no connection to either the film world or business, Khan sure can teach a lesson or two to India's richest businessmen.

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Actors turning entrepreneurs is an emerging trend. Stung by the penniless end of some of Bollywood's former giants, the new generation of Indian movie stars is turning entrepreneurial must before the limelight dims.

While opening production houses is common among most actors and directors, there are many who are into retail, fashion and hotel industry and now into the world of cricket as exemplified by Shah Rukh and Preity Zinta, who have heavily invested in the Indian Premier League.

Apart from this, Shah Rukh's production house -- Red Chillies -- is striving to emerge as the best in animation and special effects. He is, perhaps, cautious after India's biggest star Amitabh Bachchan's production house folded with losses of Rs.900 million.

One of the first few actors who began investing in business apart from the film industry was Mithun Chakraborty who started his own hotel business in south India. Since Mithun, many have followed including actors like Suniel Shetty and Bobby Deol.

Among the ladies, former Miss World and Bollywood actress Sushmita Sen has also launched her own company with plans to make movies and enter the hotel and health spa industry.

Politics, off course, is another post retirement career option that is open to actors. But there too the lifespan seems to be limited and the likes of Govinda, Vinod Khanna and Hema Malini cannot be blamed for coming back to face the camera while dabbling as people's representatives.

But not all actors are business-savvy.

Saif Ali Khan, the current heartthrob of Bollywood, says: 'I am not good at business or anything else in life. The only thing I know is acting.' Fortunately for him, he seems set to become a rocker as well

but for others hope they are watching Khan carefully.

*Priyanka Khanna* ( © IANS / India eNews)