

Bollywood has Rs.1 bn riding on Big B

About Rs.1 billion is riding on the shoulders of Bollywood mega star Amitabh Bachchan, who is currently recuperating in a hospital here after he complained of abdominal pain on his 66th birthday Saturday.

The spokesperson of the Lilavati Hospital, Mohan Rajan's announcement here about Amitabh's speedy recovery might have warmed the hearts of his fans, but the producers of his under-production movies are still not counting their blessings for obvious reasons.

Bachchan, who was in the midst of his 66th birthday celebrations at his bungalow Pratiksha in Juhu, was rushed to the Nanavati Hospital early Saturday afternoon after complaining of abdominal pain and breathlessness. He was then shifted to the Lilavati Hospital where he continued to be under observation. Bachchan was being treated in suite number 1101 on the 11th floor of the hospital.

The doctors have said that test results are normal and that he will be released soon but the star won't be able to resume work for a long time.

He has already started shooting for Leena Yadav's 'Teen Patti', Sujoy Ghosh's 'Alladin' and Soojit Sarkar's 'Shoebite'.

Bachchan had, in fact, participated in the 10-day shooting schedule of 'Teen Patti' in Mumbai. He was scheduled to wrap up the shooting of the film on his birthday.

'Teen Patti', which also has Jackie Shroff, R. Madhavan and Raima Sen also in the cast, had been delayed as Bachchan had been busy shooting for 'Shoebite'.

Though Yadav, who had directed Pritish Nandy Communications' 'Shabdh' in 2005, had announced that 'Teen Patti' is a 'quickie', producer Ambika Hinduja had reportedly paid Bachchan Rs.50 million.

Amitabh's illness will delay the movie and as a result, its budget is expected to exceed Rs.250 million.

Bachchan had, of course, already finished shooting for 'Aladdin'. This Eros International's Rs.450 million fantasy movie, was earlier supposed to be produced by Ramesh and Rohan Sippy, but the duo backed out. It was courtesy Bachchan that the movie finally went to Kishore Lulla of Eros, according to a Bollywood trade source.

'Aladdin' has already gone over budget. After the debacle of their fantasy film 'Drona', the producers have now decided to release the film next year.

Sanjay Dutt, Riteish Deshmukh, Ayesha Takia and Juhi Chawla too form the cast of 'Aladdin'.

'Shoebite', which had recently hit the headlines because of a legal duel between two corporate entities - UTV and Percept Picture Company - over its copyright, is now halfway complete.

The movie was to be earlier produced by Percept Picture Company under the title of 'Johny Walker'. As Percept delayed producing it, Sarkar took the script to UTV, who agreed to produce it under the

new name, 'Shoebite'.

This Rs.250-million movie also has Sarika and Diya Mirza in leading roles.

'The delay of 'Teen Patti' and 'Shoebite' will cost their producers dearly unless they have the insurance against the leading artistes. Eros is safe, because Bachchan has already finished shooting for the film,' said a Bollywood trade source.

Apart from these, there are few more movies which have already been announced with Bachchan in the cast. They include 'Time Machine', 'Pocket Maar', 'Aankhen 2', 'Bhairavi', 'Komagata Maru,' 'Struggler', Talisman' and his home production 'The Legend of Kunal'.

None of these movies, of course, has not gone on the floors as yet.

It will take at least two months before Bachchan becomes fit enough to be able to shoot for his movies as the doctors have already advised him sufficient rest in spite of the speedy recovery he has shown at the hospital.

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