

Film on Abu Salem to roll next month in Portugal

A three-hour film on the life and times of mobster Abu Salem is poised for shooting in Portugal and [Mumbai](#) next month, and the producer hopes to get the court's nod to get the man now in jail to feature in it.

Abu Salem, lodged at the high-security Arthur Road Jail here, may appear in the movie if the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) court allows him.

The special court, presently hearing the 1993 Mumbai bombings case, will try Abu Salem for his complicity in the blasts separately from the other 123 accused.

Of the accused, 100 have been pronounced guilty and the remaining acquitted.

'The film will capture Salem's rise from a small-time street vendor in suburban Andheri to a dreaded mobster. I got the idea of making the film on Salem's life after I interacted with him in jail,' said Salem's lawyer Ashok Sarogi.

'During my interaction, I found that there was a tale behind his life's story. The film will project him as a man with a gentle heart,' Sarogi said.

The untitled three-hour Hindi movie is being produced by Sarogi's wife Saria and directed by N. Chandra with an Rs.40 million budget.

The cast includes leading Bollywood actors who would be playing the roles of Abu Salem and his love interest Monica Bedi, a former actor. But Sarogi is not disclosing the names at this stage.

The Sarogis are hopeful of roping in the mobster for some close-in shots, provided the TADA court grants permission.

'We want him for some close-in shots to be filmed within the city. We would move the TADA court to allow him to come out of the jail under police escort,' said Saria.

'However, if the court turns down our plea, then we will have to do the shots with a duplicate.'

Apart from Mumbai, [Bangalore](#) and Salem's birth place Sarai Mir village in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, the producers want to shoot part of the film in Dubai, where the mobster went into hiding after he fled the country.

He fled Mumbai after the March 1993 bombings. He went to Dubai, from where he continued his extortion operations from the UAE before leaving for the US.

But with the UAE authorities refusing to grant permission to shoot, the film will be shot in other locations, which have a similarity with Dubai, Saria said.

'We will visit Portugal next month to start shooting at Lisbon and Cascais, some 25 km from the Portuguese capital, where Salem and Monica Bedi spent two years, before being nabbed in Lisbon by the Portuguese police for overstaying.'

Salem is charged with being involved in the Mumbai blasts of 1993. The bombings killed 257 people, injured hundreds and destroyed property worth Rs.300 million.

However, it was the killing of music baron Gulshan Kumar in 1997, allegedly by Abu Salem's gang that pushed the man up in the underworld hierarchy. His men also attacked Bollywood producer Rajeev Rai in 1997.

The gang is believed to have organised the killing of actress Manisha Koirala's secretary Ajit Deewani.

Abu Salem and Monica Bedi were arrested in 2002 after an Interpol Red Corner alert. They were sentenced to prison terms for travelling on false documents.

He served 39 months in a Lisbon prison. The two were extradited from Portugal to India in November 2005.

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