



Losses in IPL season prompts theatres to screen matches

Meena Iyer | TNN

Mumbai: Exactly 32 movies, which released when the 2009 IPL was on, flopped. So a section of theatres in Mumbai have already done the planning to screen IPL matches next year instead of movies to avoid being singed again.

Anyway, during the March-April 2010, the only big films likely to release are Akshay Kumar's *Houseful* and *Action Replay*. Three small-budget films — *Paan Sing Tomar*, *Peter Gaya Kaam Se* and *Jaane Kahan Se Aaye Hai*—are also looking for a release window at the same time. So exhibitors are naturally worried.

"Things were so bleak in certain small towns that it became difficult for the theatre owners to be able to cough up the rentals," a trade insider said. "Even ushers' salaries couldn't be paid," he added.

Between March 12 and 25 April as IPL-3 is going to be

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screened at theatres across the country by UFO Movies. "Even if, God forbid, the movie content fails, exhibitors will not starve," producer Rajat Rawail said.

Cinemax senior vice-president Devang Sampat agreed. "IPL will work as an alternate

content. It will keep the multiplex-going habit active even when movie content is not there and it also provides the advertiser a chance to earn by running his commercials between matches," he said.

Sanjay Gaikwad of UFO said: "January to April in the last couple of years has been a lean period. Our bringing IPL to cinemas is therefore a boon for exhibitors across India." The occupancy in the first months of each year has touched as low as 5% in the last two IPL seasons.

"With producers shying away from releasing movies, the exhibitors were badly affected," said Rawail.