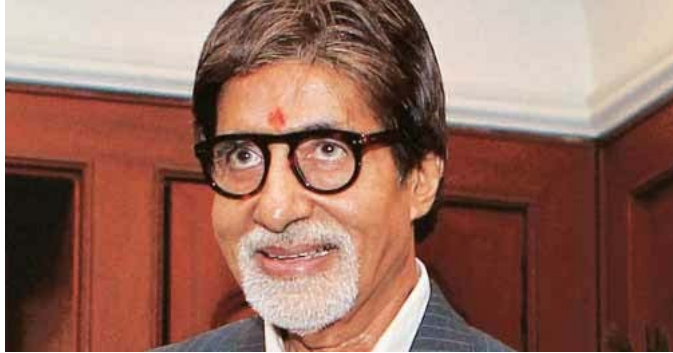


## Big B making bullish bets, invests in penny stock firms

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Amitabh Bachchan has made markets curious. Big B is believed to be **investing in stocks during this bearish phase** and the buzz on Dalal Street is that the superstar has been buying shares at lower levels to raise his holding in low-profile firms in which he has over one per cent stake.

These stocks are not market favourites and it is still not known as to why Bachchan is investing in these unknown companies. However, following the news of Bachchan buying at discounted prices, the stocks of these companies gained substantially on Wednesday. Operators made a killing as these stocks suddenly came into the limelight.

{table}Bachchan is reportedly increasing his holding in **penny-stock companies** such as the Yash Birla-controlled Birla Pacific Medspa. Other low-profile firms, which he has been investing in are Fineotex Chemical, M&B Switchgears and Neuland Laboratories. While he has been buying shares of these companies in the last few quarters, it could not be immediately ascertained as to how much additional shares he has acquired in the current quarter.

All the shares are in the name of Amitabh Harivansh Rai Bachchan. An email sent to Bachchan remained unanswered. Calls made to his office also did not elicit response. According to stock exchange data, Bachchan as of March has 1,675,000 shares in Birla Pacific Medspa, which account for 1.49 per cent stake in the company. Between September 2011 and March 2012, his stake has risen by 0.06 per cent in the firm.

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According to sources, Bachchan has also increased his holding in Fineotex Chemical recently. As of March, Bachchan had 3.97 per cent holding in the company with 445,482 shares. Between December 2011 and March 2012, he had risen his holding by 0.07 per cent when the price was lower by 15 per cent. The promoter of the company is Surendra Tibrewala and Bachchan is the single largest individual shareholder.

There have been some bulk deals in these companies in the current quarter but it is still not clear whether some broker had bought shares on Bachchan's behalf. The shareholding data can only be updated after June. The other two firms in which Bachchan invested are Indorebased M&B Switchgears, which manufactures distribution, power, furnace transformers, and Hyderabad-based pharmaceuticals company Neuland Laboratories.

As of March, Bachchan's holding in M&B Switchgears was 2.3 per cent with 5,50,000 shares and he has 1.71 per cent holding in Neuland Labs with 92,530 shares. Birla Pacific Medspa closed with a gain of 2.85 per cent at Rs 5.05. Fineotex Chemical was up seven per cent to close at Rs 39. M&B Switchgears gained 3.44 per cent to close at Rs 132.15 and Neuland Lab gained 3.29 per cent to close at Rs 80.05.

Stock analysts declined to comment but were surprised at Bachchan's choice of stocks. "He should not be investing in penny stocks and these unknown firms. He should not be wasting his money. A person of his stature should invest in blue-chip stocks.

A regular trader can experiment with penny stocks. There are several other investment opportunities which Bachchan should explore," said a stock analyst on condition of anonymity.