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BCCI opens bidding for 10-yr IPL theatre rights

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Leading multiplexes and media companies are queuing up for the theatrical rights to the Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket matches for the coming decade.

Sources say PVR Cinemas, BIG Cinemas, UTV and UFO are in the race. Theatrical rights will include rights to screen the matches live in cinema halls, along with rights to telecast the matches in bars, restaurants, buses, hospitals, trains and a host of other public places.

Since public places usually have a large fan crowd, it's an opportunity for both the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the rights owner to earn a lot of money.

UFO has access to over 700 screens, BIG Cinemas to around 240 screens, followed by PVR with over 100 screens.

BCCI has set the floor price at \$2 million for the period between 2010 and 2019. "The price looks steep but we still need to go through the documents," said a PVR executive. The bids have to come in by November 12. BCCI had wanted to invite bids for these rights last year, but didn't go ahead after a widespread lack of in-



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terest for the money they were quoting. This time, with multiplexes having a tough year with the non-performance of movies, coupled with the impact of IPL matches, the theatrical rights will be hot property, say experts.

"Last season, buying theatrical rights didn't make sense for the price BCCI was asking. But this time, with BCCI adding rights to showcase the match in public places, recovery of money will be easy," added a source from UFO.

The winning bid will be allowed to feature advertisements in breaks between overs and innings, when a wicket is lost, strategy breaks and at fall of wickets. However, BCCI has made it clear that the rights holder cannot telecast a match in a city where the IPL match is being held. For instance, if a match is scheduled in Mumbai on that particular day, the rights holder cannot screen the match in Mumbai theatres and public places at the time.