



Group M, UFO Moviez lead race for IPL's multiplex rights

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Group M, a leading media agency, and UFO Moviez, digital movie exhibitors and distributors, are said to be front runners to bag the in-theatre telecast rights for the second season of the Indian Premier League (IPL), starting April 18.

The 59-match Twenty20 IPL tournament has been relocated to South Africa owing to security concerns after attacks on Sri Lankan cricketers in Pakistan. In-theatre telecast rights mean that the matches will be telecast live in a "stadium-like" environment in 250 multiplexes.

Although an official announcement is yet to be made, highly placed sources in IPL, which floated a tender for theatre rights earlier this month, confirmed that negotiations with Group M and UFO Moviez are on and the details of telecasting matches in multiplexes for the 36-day tournament were being worked out.

"IPL may work out something with both Group M and UFO Moviez together," confirmed an IPL official requesting anonymity. Sources in the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which promotes the IPL tournament, said the in-theatre rights could generate revenues worth Rs 18 crore to Rs 20 crore for IPL.

Asked about the deal, Raa-ja Kanwar, vice-chairman and director, UFO Moviez, said: "We are working out something for IPL but I cannot share the details at the moment. We have the technology to telecast a live



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match within a multiplex in real time and we will come out with all the details soon."

UFO Moviez reaches over 1,500 cinema screens in India and abroad and specialises in satellite-based transmission of films across theatres in real time. This means exhibitors using UFO technology do not require physical movie prints. UFO is likely to use similar technology for the IPL matches.

The theatre rights holder is likely to exhibit the IPL matches on a revenue-sharing model with the multiplexes that air them.

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THE PROSPECT OF broadcasting IPL is exciting multiplex owners. "We will definitely show IPL on at least one screen every day. But we will have to market the tournament really fast. The average ticket price will work out to around

Rs 100," said Devang Sampat, vice-president, Cinemax.

"There are no major movies releasing in April and May, so IPL screenings will be a bonus. But I doubt if we will be able to raise the ticket prices," added Utpal Acharya, vice-president, programming and distribution, Inox Leisure.

There are other hurdles for the exhibitors before IPL hits the

theatres. According to Acharya of Inox, exhibitors will not only require a special censor clearance for all IPL matches, but also permission to exhibit "live" matches in theatres, a first in India.

"We are bound by the Cinematograph Act that allows us to show only 35mm films in theatres," he said.

Also, multiplexes will be

required to pay entertainment tax on the basis of 100 per cent occupancy for any commercial telecast of a non-film event. This means the movie hall will have to pay entertainment tax on the full capacity even if, say, just half the tickets are sold. For the 85 million cable homes, and about 11 million direct-to-home subscribers, IPL will be telecast live on the SET MAX channel.