

## KNIGHTS IN THEIR ARMOUR: KKR SHOWS ITS COLOURS



Owner of Indian Premier League team Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) Shah Rukh Khan with team coach Dav Whatmore (second from left), bowling coach Wasim Akram (left) and Saurav Ganguly (right) at the launch of the team's new jersey in Mumbai on Tuesday night. PHOTO : PTI

## IPL's third innings promises high-scoring revenues

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With just two days to go for the third edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 tournament to get rolling, ticket sales have been brisk for the inaugural match in the suburbs of Mumbai and franchisees, broadcasters and movie hall-owners are all expecting high-scoring returns.

"Almost all the tickets have been sold and only a few Rs 1,000 denomination tickets are available. We expect full house on that day," said a tournament executive in Mumbai. The lowest priced

ticket is Rs 500 for the inaugural match between Deccan Chargers and Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR).

The story is being repeated in Kolkata where the first match starts on the March 14 between KKR and Royal Challengers. Despite ticket prices being doubled at the lowest end, from Rs 150 to Rs 300, 60 per cent of the seats have already been sold at Eden Gardens.

Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) executives said KKR's revenues from ticket sales from the first home match is expected to cross Rs 2 crore even though the stadium capacity has been halved owing to renovation.

KKR, according to CAB estimates, will rake in Rs 20 crore from the sev-

en matches the team plays in Kolkata this year. In the first IPL season in 2008, KKR earned around Rs 25 crore from the home matches in Eden Gardens, but the capacity of the stadium, at over 85,000, was double.

The enthusiasm is not limited to the stadia. UFO Moviez, which has tied up with IPL to telecast the matches in movie theatres, has already seen 100,000 tickets being sold out of around 350,000 tickets that are on offer per day.

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"The matches will be shown in 700 movie screens across India and we expect to go up to 1,000 screens by the end of the tournament," said Kapil Agarwal, joint managing director, UFO Moviez India.

Ticket prices for the matches at multiplexes have been fixed at Rs 150-160, which is the regular price for a movie ticket on the weekend. Single screens have priced their tickets between Rs 50 and Rs 60.

"The matches in the movie theatres will be shown without advertisement breaks between overs, and cheerleaders will create the environment of a stadium every time a wicket falls or a batsman hits a boundary," said Agarwal.

Advertisers are also rediscovering the attraction of IPL after the tournament was moved out of India to South Africa last year over security concerns following terrorist strikes in Mumbai in November 2008 and Assembly elections.

SET Max, the official tournament broadcaster, is expecting higher television ratings and, therefore, revenues. "We expect our ad revenues to go up 70 to 80 per cent this season over the last season," said Rohit Gupta, head of sales, Sony Entertainment Television. Last year, Sony made over Rs 450 crore from advertising revenue. It has already sold most of its inventory for this year.

Team franchisees also say sponsorship revenues have gone up over 30 per cent because most of them have roped in new companies and have managed to raise the rates paid by existing sponsors.

Chennai Super Kings, for instance, has roped in two new sponsors, Orient Fans and UniverCell Telecommunications, bringing the total number of advertisers to 15.

"Usually, deal sizes range between Rs 1 crore and Rs 15 crore, depending on the capacity at which the brand will be present. But new sponsors coming on board this year are paying a 30 to 40 per cent premium over the first IPL, and existing sponsors are increasing the rates they were paying by around 15 per cent," says Rakesh Singh, marketing head of Chennai Super Kings.

He says the franchisee would be making over 30 per cent more advertising revenue this year over last year.

Chennai Super Kings expects around Rs 1 crore from merchandise sales alone this

year — a new source of revenue altogether. The team has tied up with Oceanbed Gifts and Merchandise, a Gurgaon-based company to sell its branded products.

Oceanbed promoter Gayathri Venugopalan says 26 products — such as sports bottle, 3D mugs, wallets, keychains, mini autograph bats, bags, T-shirts and wristbands — will be sold through around 100 outlets during the tournament.

According to sources in Red Chillies Entertainment, the Shah Rukh Khan-led company that owns KKR, sponsorship and advertising revenues this year for the team have already increased nearly 50 per cent over the first IPL season in 2008. Joy Bhattacharya, CEO of KKR, says: "We have already got four new sponsors, including Videocon, and are looking for more."