

50 city cinemas to show IPL

Bharati Dubey | TNN

It is cricket-ainment time at cinema halls across India, with nearly 650 screens gearing up for live telecasts of Indian Premier League (IPL) matches, which will begin from Friday and continue for more than six weeks. Sources said that the final number of screens could cross 700. Cine-goers will get to watch matches without commercial breaks and also avail of other incentives. Topmost among them is master-blaster Sachin Tendulkar's autographed bat, which will be circulated across all cinemas and later auctioned. Sanjay Gaikwad, of UFO Moviez, said, "A bat Tendulkar has used will be auctioned off." The funds will go to Apnalaya, an NGO endorsed by him.

Tendulkar also auctioned off the first theatre ticket for the matches. From a base price of Rs 5 lakh it went for Rs 11 lakh. The money will also go to Apnalaya. Tendulkar said, "This is a very good initiative and if high-content cricket reaches the remotest areas of the country more and more youngsters will be encouraged to play the game."

In Mumbai, about 50 cinema halls will screen matches, including Cinemax, New Excelsior, Roxy, Meghraj (Vashi), Gem (Bandra), Inox, Fame, PVR, Big and Broadway (Kandivli).

While the cinemas are geared up for the games, there is a small hitch in opening the advance bookings. Inox cinemas' vice-president (marketing) Harshvardhan Gangurde said, "We are all set, but await a formal notification from the state government on taxes. Otherwise, things are in place." There will be no entertainment

tax exemption on IPL tickets. Gaikwad added, "The government will be charging about 20 to 34%, which is the same for any film ticket." Sources said tickets would cost Rs 250 to Rs 300, the cost of an average movie ticket on weekends.

Some cinemas will offer alcohol. Devang Sampat, vice president, Cinemax Cinemas, said, "Corporate bookings have started and we are offering alcohol with them."

Most team sponsors have already done block bookings for the entire IPL season. A source said, "There is a lot of demand for Kolkata Knight Riders and Mumbai Indians, who probably have the maximum sponsors on board. Last season, KKR matches got the maximum eyeballs. With Tendulkar in tremendous form, there will definitely be a mad rush for his matches too."

Cinemas will offer cricketing merchandise and have cheerleaders, celebrities and live bands. Gaikwad said, "We are trying to bring the stadium into the theatre. There are lot of small towns where bookings are full and we have to add screens. In Nagpur it's house-full even before the tournament begins."

In some states, including Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, cinema halls will not

be able to screen the matches as film producers have objected because there would be fewer screens to show local movies. Gangurde, of INOX, said, "We hope to resolve the issue in Bangalore, but no live telecasts will happen in cinemas in TN and AP."

TREASURE TO KEEP: A bat autographed by Tendulkar will be auctioned

