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'Loss-incurring IPL franchisees eager to pull out'

II Agencies

NEW DELHI/LONDON/MUMBAI, 11 FEB: A television network's website reported today five of the Indian Premier League's eight franchisees were eager to dispose of their "financially overburdened teams" and call it a day.

Although Priety Zinta denied yesterday she was getting rid of the Kings XI team, the network suggested the outfit were very close to being sold to Hero Honda. "The move is imminent," it claimed, adding: "Even the Rajasthan Royals" were looking for a buyer.

"GMR Sports are looking at a valuation of around \$325 million for the Delhi Daredevils, a team - they - purchased for \$84 million."

The website said five franchisees were willing to let go of their teams, with only the Deccan Chargers, Mumbai Indians and the Royal Challengers, Bangalore, being firm on carrying on. Franchisees think, with two more teams coming in next year, "profitability" will be affected, it was said. They "are unwilling to shoulder the mounting losses ever since the IPL moved to South Africa." It is said each franchisee has lost up to Rs 35 crore.

In another development, following in the footsteps of Hampshire, Surrey could become the second English county to tie up with an IPL franchise as the Delhi Daredevils and the Kolkata Knight Riders are reportedly keen on forging an alliance with it.

According to a report in *The Times*, London, the Surrey chief executive, Mr Paul Sheldon, is in India for talks with IPL franchisees and has got feelers from the Daredevils and the KKR. "Any deal is more likely to be a straightforward pairing of two clubs rather than wider global branding," the report said.

"I am in India to investigate with a range of people any possible link with a country that is full of opportunity. It is vital that Surrey are at the forefront of such discussions," Mr Sheldon was quoted as saying by the newspaper.

"The Delhi Daredevils and the Kolkata Knight Riders are thought to be keen on partnerships in England," the report said.

Hampshire became the first county club to forge an alliance with an IPL franchise when they tied up with the Rajasthan Royals last week.



Mr Kapil Agarwal, joint managing director of UFO Moviez India, at a Press conference in Kolkata on Thursday. The company said it would show Indian Premier League matches in theatres and multiplexes. II SNS

Counties' problem

English counties are set to miss out on the 2010 Champions League Twenty20 after it was announced the event would be staged between 10 and 26 September, according to the BBC.

Those dates clash with the end of the English domestic season, prompting the English and Wales Cricket Board to call for a rethink on the event's timing. In those 16 days, there are two County Championship rounds, and the semi-finals and the final of the new ECB 40 League. England also play a one-day series against Pakistan from 10 to 22 September. Mr Lalit Modi, chairman of the Champions League and commissioner of the IPL as well as vice-president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, announced the date change on his Twitter feed. "Dates are finalised as Sep 10 to Sep 26 this year," he wrote. Last year the inaugural Champions League competition started on 8 October, featuring English counties Somerset and Sussex as well as teams from India, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, West Indies and Sri

Lanka. However, the September schedule for this year effectively means the two English counties who qualify from the domestic Twenty20 Cup will be unable to take part. "The ECB has expressed serious concern to the Board of Control for Cricket in India, Cricket Australia and Cricket South Africa concerning this decision and the matter will be discussed with the respective chairmen and presidents who are currently meeting in Dubai," the England and Wales Cricket Board said. Mr Modi today dismissed allegations the ECB had not been consulted before finalising the event's dates. He asked the ECB to alter its county schedule. "Given that Australia's tour to India begins on 2 October and other countries have (their future tours programme) games, it was the only window available this year," Mr Modi said.

The government on Thursday assured full protection to IPL cricket tournament. In another development, IPL supremo Mr Modi and USA Cricket's chief executive, Mr Donald Lockerbie, are exploring options to take the IPL to the US.