

IPL rocked by tax probe

AFP, New Delhi



Indian Premier League (IPL) chief Lalit Modi faced an uncertain future Tuesday after the government launched a probe into the financial dealings of the money-spinning cricket tournament.

The tax investigation began after revelations by Modi led to the resignation of a government minister and claims from the opposition that the league was a front for money laundering and illegal betting.

Top officials of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which owns the IPL, are believed to blame Modi, 46, for attracting the taxman to their door and many want him to quit as IPL commissioner.

Modi, the driving force behind the success of the IPL, which has seen its brand value surge to 4.1 billion dollars in just three short years, has vehemently denied any wrongdoing.

"Lots in media -- speculations," Modi wrote on his Twitter page from Dubai where he is representing the BCCI at an International Cricket Council (ICC) meeting.

"Welcome all investigation. Ready to extend all cooperation," he added.

The IPL, which began in 2008, features the world's top cricketers playing a shortened format of the game known as Twenty20.

There are eight franchises owned by India's wealthy businessmen and film stars.

When Modi returns to India later Tuesday he will be confronted by a combative media, which has already predicted that his days as IPL boss are numbered.

There was growing speculation that Modi will quit before a meeting of the 14-member IPL governing council in Mumbai next Monday, but BCCI officials cautioned against jumping the gun.

"Look, there is a lot of anger that Modi has put us in such a mess," a senior BCCI official told AFP. "The board has never faced such embarrassment."

"But the general opinion is to give Modi a chance to explain his side of the story... if he wants to that is."

Federal minister Sharad Pawar, a former Indian cricket chief who takes over as ICC president in June, was confident the IPL's governing council would resolve the matter.

"They will take a collective, unanimous decision and give future direction to Indian cricket," said Pawar, who himself is not part of the IPL set-up.

"The total effort will be to protect the interests of Indian cricket, the cricket-loving public and the players."

The income-tax department has summoned IPL officials to hand over all tournament paperwork by Friday, including

details on television rights, sponsorships and deals with franchisees and players.

Modi brought down junior foreign minister Shashi Tharoor by revealing on Twitter the ownership structure of a new IPL franchise that showed a free stake had been gifted to the politician's girlfriend.

Tharoor, a former top UN diplomat, was forced to resign on Sunday over allegations -- which he strongly denied -- that the stake was a kickback for his help in putting together the consortium that bought the franchise.

The furore led the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party to demand an investigation into the IPL, which it labelled "the Corruption Premier League."

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"Modi has done a great job with the IPL, which is one of the leading sports brands in the world," Mallya told reporters. "The entire IPL cannot be tainted by this controversy."

"We at the Royal Challengers are clean. I am sure the other franchisees will also want to be transparent. Let's not jump the gun. We must wait for the tax probe to be over."

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Shakil Kasem (4th from R), head of management committee GP-BCB NCA and Grameenphone's chief communication officer Kazi Monirul Kabir (4th from L) pose for photographs along with the coaches and captains of Bangladesh and South Africa National Academy teams after a press conference in Gulshan yesterday.

Toddler eyes golfing record

Golf

INTERNET, undated

A five-year-old girl is seeking entry into the Guinness Book of Records for a remarkable feat she pulled off during a golf tournament.

Eleanor Gamble, who stands only 3'5" tall, sank a hole-in-one during a juniors tournament at Cambridge Lakes Golf Course last week.

The 86-yard hole required a drive over a lake, with bunkers adding to the danger.

However, Gamble -- playing in the tournament with her brother Jacob -- nailed it with only one bounce of the ball.

She said: "I was very excited. I am going to keep playing golf, and see if I will be better than my brother."

Her father David said the family were trying to get her name in the Guinness Book of Records.

"She keeps saying: 'I can't believe I got a hole-in-one,'" he said. "We had her great grandparents over from Ireland and we took them to the course to show off our son Jacob, who is 10."

"He is really quite good but Eleanor has stolen his limelight. There were about 15 people on the tee watching."

"She got the ball over the water and then it hopped over a bunker and someone shouted that she had got it in. We were all quite speechless really."

"I think she might have broken a record because the youngest female hole-in-one golfer listed on the Guinness World Records website is by an eight-year-old from America."

"Eleanor has smashed the record by three years. We submitted an application and now we're waiting to hear back from them."

The owner of the nine-hole course in Cambridge, Bob Barnes, added: "We get plenty of hole-in-ones because all of our holes are a par-3 so they are within range."

"I've been at the club for 10 years and this is the first time anything like this has happened though. It is incredible."

Women's cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Indira Road Kira Chakra recorded a four-wicket victory over Dhaka Wanderers Club in their Women's Club Cup Cricket Tournament at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Despite making a good start through openers Labony Aktar and Kime Karmokar, Dhaka Wanderers were bowled out for 109 in 36.4 overs. Labony scored highest 28 while Kime scored 16. Salma Aktar took four wickets for fifteen runs while Mina Khatun took three for ten.

In their reply, Indira Road lost a couple of wickets cheaply, but Puja Das stood tall with a 40-run knock that saw them reach the victory target in just 18.3 overs and four wickets to spare.

Bolt to run in S Korea

AFP, Seoul

Jamaican sprint king Usain Bolt will run his first solo 100 metres of the season in May at the South Korean venue for next year's World Championships, organisers said Tuesday.

The World and Olympic triple gold medalist will compete at the Pre-Championships Meeting on May 19 in Daegu, the host city for the world champs in August-September next year.

Bolt, the world record holder in both the 100m and 200m events, is due to compete in the 4x100m relay at the USAV The World Penn Relays in Philadelphia on Saturday.

"It is our immense privilege to have the world's fastest man open his 100m season in Daegu," Moon Dong-Hoo, a co-president of the organising committee, said according to Yonhap news agency.

"He has tremendous support in Korea and everyone here expects him to shatter the meeting record," he said.

Bolt is scheduled to run his first 200m race of the season at the Jamaica International Invitational on May 1, and will head from Daegu to the 200m at the Shanghai Diamond League in China on May 23.

South Africa

FROM PAGE 17

Van der Wath and Thandi Tshabalala.

The 14-member hosts squad, on the other hand, have as many as ten players who have represented the national team in some form of the game or another. Junaed Siddiqui will lead the side while Shamsur Rahman Shuvo will act as his deputy.

Russel drop

FROM PAGE 17

forwards squandered a lot of chances and we are also not thinking of finishing the league as runners-up at the moment," said Liton, whose side beat Rahmatganj in their first game 1-0 with a last gasp strike from Abass Inusah.

Back to the game, Salah having snatched a ball from Asif Hossain played a cute one-two with Rajon Mia before entering the danger zone and prodding the Rajon forward pass home in the 16th minute.

After that Salah squandered two sitters while Rahmatganj goalkeeper Arifuzzaman Himel thwarted a good effort from Rajon Mia.

After the resumption, Rahmatganj kept Sheikh Russel at bay and got the equaliser through a corner kick as Sheikh Russel defender Kamal Hossain headed a low corner taken by Shahed home in the 66th minute.

Rahmatganj could have even left the field with a victory had a powerful shot taken by Jakir Hossain not rattled the bar in the 81st minute.

Million dollars for Wimbledon winners

Tennis

AFP, London

The winners of this year's Wimbledon singles titles will net a staggering one million pounds (1.54 million dollars) in prize money after the All-England Club announced a significant rise in the rewards on offer at the grass-court grand slam on Tuesday.

The credit-crunch defying figures mean reigning men's champion Roger Federer and women's holder Serena Williams will benefit from an increase of 150,000 pounds (231,145 dollars) on the winning purses in 2009 if they retain their crowns in south-west London.

The total prize money for the event has been increased by 1.175 million pounds (1.81 million dollars) to 13.725 million pounds (21.147 million dollars).

All England Club chairman Tim Phillips insisted the landmark million pound prize reflected the tournament's desire to provide a fitting reward for the world's best players.

"Wimbledon exists in a highly competitive global marketplace and it is the world's best players who create and drive the interest," Phillips said.

"It is important that we offer a level of prize money which is both appropriate to the prestige of the event and which gives the players full and fair reward."

"It shows that the championships are successful and it shows that we care about the players."

The purse for the champions at Wimbledon has now doubled in the last 10 years and is just below the 1.6 million dollars awarded to the winners of the 2009 US Open.

The runners-up in the men's and women's events at Wimbledon, which runs from June 21 to July 4 this year, will bank 500,000 pounds (769,618 dollars), while the semifinalists will take home 250,000 pounds (384,782 dollars).

Winning the men's and women's doubles events is worth 240,000 pounds (369,334 dollars) per pair, while even players in the singles who are knocked out in the first round will earn 11,250 pounds (17,312 dollars) for their unsuccessful day's work.

But as well as keeping Wimbledon firmly established as the world's premier tennis tournament, the decision to raise the prize money to unprecedented levels has also been influenced by the slump in the value of the pound.

"We need to offer prize money that is competitive in the international market," Phillips said.

"That means exchange rates become a consideration and the fact that sterling has fallen by 20 to 25 percent against the dollar and the euro over the past three years means the increases are slightly bigger than has been the case over the last few years."

"The players are what this tournament has been all about and we have to reward them fairly for their extraordinary efforts in this extremely competitive individual global sport."

Sami, Rehman in Pak WT20 squad

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan Monday named paceman Mohammad Sami and left-arm spinner Abdur Rehman as replacements for the World Twenty20 following confusion between the cricket administration and the selectors.

The selectors Sunday had named Sami and paceman Mohammad Irfan as replacements for Umar Gul and Yasir Arafat, who were both ruled out of the World Twenty20 due to injuries.

But the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said selectors did not follow the procedure for replacements and on Monday named Rehman in place of Irfan.

"Sami and Rehman will replace Gul and Arafat and both the names have been approved by the PCB chairman Ijaz Butt," the PCB said.

Gul, who is the leading wicket-taker in Twenty20 cricket with 43 in 26 matches and also has the best figures of 5-6 against New Zealand in the World Twenty20 in England, hurt his shoulder while Arafat injured his calf.

Both were ruled out on Sunday. Rehman, 30, has played two Tests, 11 one-day internationals and two Twenty20s for Pakistan.

Unlucky Irfan has attracted attention as one of Pakistan's tallest cricketers and for his left-arm fast bowling, taking 43 wickets in 10 first-class matches after making his debut in the last season.

The West Indies host the third edition of the World Twenty20 from April 30-May 16. Pakistan, placed in Group A, faces Bangladesh on May 1 and Australia the following day.

Camp derailed

FROM PAGE 17

BHF general secretary Khondoker Jamiluddin expressed his surprise after hearing the fact from the reporters and termed it as a 'mismanagement.'

The games governing body has also included two players -- Ashikur Rahman and Zahidul Islam Rajon -- in the 25-member squad.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

Tight security

FROM PAGE 17

Mumbai. The final April 25 will be held here as per the original schedule.

Roy, who reviewed the security arrangements, said the vehicle parking facility will be some distance away from the venue, which has a seating capacity of 60,000.

"It is evident from the explosions in Bangalore that the IPL is on the hit-list (of terrorists) and accordingly, the requisite number of police personnel has been deployed at the venue," he said.

Besides frisking spectators at each of the nine entry points, there will be over 60 metal detectors, a contingent of State Reserve Police Force commandos and police in plainclothes.

A large number of closed circuit television cameras will keep an eye inside and outside the stadium while a huge contingent of armed private security personnel will supplement the police efforts.

MSC point

FROM PAGE 17

that they did not receive any bylaws of the tournament.

MSC also informed that during the half-time break, the federation general secretary (Khondoker Jamil Uddin) had come into their tent and informed them that the second half would be 15 minutes less than normal and the team leading at that stage would be declared champions.

The statement also alleged that some officials of the federation are intentionally trying to shift their own blame to Mohammedan, which they claimed is a pathetic effort. They protested and said that these activities intend to damage the club's image.

Meanwhile, BHF general secretary Khondoker Jamil Uddin, who tendered his resignation after the Club Cup final, although it is yet to be accepted, said that he has decided to continue his duty at the request of the BHF president and the national players ahead of the Asian Games Qualifiers to be held in Bangladesh from May 7-15.

He said he would take a decision on whether he would withdraw his resignation at the conclusion of the qualifiers.

IPL council to decide

CRICINFO, undated



The IPL governing council will meet on April 26 and take a unanimous decision on the way ahead from the current controversy, Sharad Pawar, the ICC's president-elect, has said.

Pawar's statement came after a meeting with the BCCI president, Shashank Manohar, in Delhi on a day thick with rumour and speculation over the fate of Lalit Modi, the IPL commissioner.

Modi is en route from Dubai, where he attended an ICC meeting, to Delhi where he is expected to meet Pawar later on Tuesday. It is being widely speculated that Modi's role in the IPL will be diminished, if not altogether curtailed. He has not made any public statements in the past few days save one on Monday declaring he was willing to cooperate with any investigation.

Pawar, who spoke to a scrum of journalists outside his house, said neither he nor Manohar had the authority to take a unilateral decision on Modi's fate and that it was best left to the governing council. "Our (BCCI) total approach in the Governing Council will be to take collective, unanimous decisions, and give future direction to Indian cricket," he said.

Asked whether Modi would accept the governing council's decision, Pawar said, "Don't forget Mr Modi is also a vice president of the BCCI and our total approach and past experience [is], we always take collective and unanimous decision that everyone is party to, including I hope Lalit Modi."

His statement followed talks with two of the senior-most members of the federal government, which has directed a wide-ranging and coordinated series of investigations of the BCCI, IPL and the franchisees that comprise the league.

Removing Modi is not a simple matter for the IPL's governing council or the BCCI, though both have the powers to do so. Modi was appointed to his post by Pawar, when the latter was BCCI president, and any move to remove him would have to go through Pawar, who retains considerable influence in Indian cricket and who has publicly backed Modi.

Youth battles experience

FROM PAGE 17

Shakib also has to deal with the bitter memory of losing the decisive Premier League match against Mashud. The ex-national struck a lucky boundary to stun Shakib's Abahani and confirm Mohammedan's title after a long break.

But the young man was not ready to bring that matter into the debate.

"I just forgot about it. It's a new game and new tournament, so our focus is on how we can play our best in the final," he said.

The Kings of Khulna tried hard to surprise their opponents by roping in India's dashing opening batsman Virender Sehaw. But that attempt was unsuccessful and

they could only confirm middle-order batsman Ryan Bailey, who occasionally also bowls medium pace, from South Africa.

"We contacted with Sourav Ganguly but he declined for injury while Sehaw initially agreed to play but later learnt that he also has injury problem. We are yet to confirm hard-hitting Kolkata Knight Riders batsman Manoj Tiwary," informed Arman Islam, Kings of Khulna's team official.

Rajshahi Rangers skipper Masud however was focusing on his side's 'team spirit'.

"True, we don't have big names in the team but we have a very good combination to win the final. I believe every-

body will be inspired by their semifinal performance. Our main asset is our team spirit which is also a big advantage for us," said the former Bangladesh captain.

"I think it would be a good contest because both sides worked hard to move into the final," he added.

The final will kick off at 5.20pm with satellite channel ATN Bangla telecasting the match live while Bangladesh Betar will run live commentary.

There will be a fireworks show at the end of the match while music from the DJ stand and dancers will keep the T20 spirit going throughout the game.

Tickets will be available at the ticket counter adjacent to VIP gate of the stadium.