

# Sreesanth caught

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Three Indian cricketers, including Test bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, were arrested on the charge of accepting money for spot-fixing in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL).

Eleven bookmakers were also arrested in this connection, said Delhi Police Commissioner Neeraj Kumar, as he gave details of three games in the IPL.

Kumar told a news conference that more bookmakers are likely to be arrested as part of the inquiry which has already seen the accused players suspended by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Sreesanth, who has played 27 Tests for India, is alleged to have been paid 40 lakh rupees to give away around 14 runs in an over while playing for Rajasthan Royals against the Kings XI Punjab on May 9.

His teammate Ankeet Chavan had also allegedly agreed to give away as many runs in a match on Wednesday night against Mumbai Indians in exchange of 60 lakh rupees, police said.

A third Royals player, Ajit Chandila, was believed to have been paid 2 million rupees for giving away a set number of runs in a match against Pune Warriors, police said.

"This much money has changed hands. This money was given to them by the bookies," Kumar said.

"The modus operandi included asking the bowlers to give pre-decided signals with the help of their accessories like watches, wrist bands, neck chains and towels."

"The bowlers were asked to concede at least a given number of runs in a pre-determined and mutually decided over. After receiving the signal from the bowler, the bookies would bet heavily and make huge profits."

Kumar said the fixing was organised by members of the Mumbai mafia, adding that the overall mastermind was 'sitting abroad'.

"There is definite proof that the underworld is involved but it would be wrong to take names. There is no concrete evidence on the basis of which I can name any member of the underworld," he said.

Sreesanth, 30, and his two teammates, who are yet to play for India, were arrested by Delhi police in Mumbai after Wednesday night's match and were brought to the Indian capital for questioning, Kumar said.

Angry fans burnt posters of the players during a protest in the southern city of Bangalore.

The Rajasthan Royals said they would cooperate fully with police in the investigation.

"We are completely taken by surprise... we will fully cooperate with the authorities

to ensure a thorough investigation," said a statement.

"The management at Rajasthan Royals has zero tolerance approach to anything that is against the spirit of the game."

Indian Sports Minister Jitendra Singh described the arrests as "unfortunate" and asked the authorities to take strict action against the players if they are found guilty.

"A mechanism must be put in place to prevent such unethical activities and ensure clean sports in the country," he said.

The BCCI suspended the players from the IPL and referred the matter to its Disciplinary Committee for further action. Board presi-

dent

dent