

New Delhi halts IPL cricket tournament amid regional clash

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India's cricket authority has suspended the Indian Premier League, the most lucrative tournament in the sport, as fears mounted over an escalating conflict with Pakistan.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India, the sport's governing body, yesterday postponed the short-format T20 contest for one week, citing "concern and sentiments" from IPL franchises and players.

A revised schedule would be announced in "due course after a comprehensive assessment of the situation in consultation with relevant authorities and stakeholders", the BCCI said.

The decision came after a match in Dharamshala, a city in the Himalayan foothills close to India-controlled Kashmir, was halted after fighting erupted along the border this week.

The IPL on Thursday relocated the match to the city of Ahmedabad in the state of Gujarat "due to logistical challenges", it said.

India's IPL cricket season, which

began on March 22, was set to run to May 25. The IPL was last partly suspended in 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, with matches later relocated to the United Arab Emirates.

The Pakistan Cricket Board also announced yesterday that its domestic T20 tournament, the Pakistan Super League, would move its last eight matches of the season to the UAE after the postponement of a match on Thursday in Rawalpindi, home of the army's headquarters, where Pakistani forces said they shot down Indian drones.

Mohsin Naqvi, the PCB's chair, said:

"The PCB has decided to shift the remaining matches to UAE so that the domestic as well as foreign cricketers . . . can be saved from the possible reckless targeting by India."

The suspension of the IPL, which has been valued at more than \$6bn, threatens a blow to the media business of India's most valuable company, Reliance Industries.

The conglomerate owned by Mukesh Ambani, Asia's richest man, has exclusive broadcast rights for the IPL after a merger of Reliance's entertainment arm with Disney's Indian assets last year.

Karan Taurani, a Mumbai-based analyst at Elara Capital, estimated that the suspension might result in losses of 30 per cent to 40 per cent of broadcasting revenue.

The IPL's launch in 2008 revolutionised cricket, popularising a fast-paced format that has made it the world's second-most valuable sports league on a per-game basis after the US's National Football League.

It has also driven rapid subscription growth to Reliance and Disney's streaming platform, which has more than 100mn users. Reliance said last month that this year's IPL tournament had a record opening weekend with 1.4bn digital viewers, a 35 per cent year-on-year rise.

JioStar, the joint venture broadcaster, said it supported the decision to suspend the IPL. "JioStar will work closely with all stakeholders to ensure the transition is managed in a seamless manner and everyone involved in the tournament broadcast returns home safely."

Although it attracts cricketers from around the world, the IPL has banned Pakistani players since the Mumbai attacks in November 2008.



All out: a technical failure led to an IPL game in Dharamshala on Thursday being abandoned

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